Soviet Literature

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1946 STALIN PRIZE WINNERS IN LITERATURE

VERA PANOVA was awarded a Stalin Prize for her novel *Fellow-Travellers* (see *Soviet Literature*, Nos. 6 and 8, 1946). Panova had been writing for about fifteen years but it was this comparave ly short wartitime novel that brought her great popularity. The novel is founded on facts. The authoress worked on Hospital Train No. 312 and was an eyewitness of the tremendous labour effort that was the contribution to victory made by people on the home front. The majority of her characters have their prototypes in real life. Panova changed all names and in some cases combined details from the life stories of different people to produce a composite character necessary to her general plot: she, however, never allows fantasy to replace her general "true to life" principle.

ELMAR GRIN wrote his first book about an Estonian collective farm in Leningrad Region shortly before the war. When the Germans attacked the Soviet Union, Grin took his place as an officer in the Soviet Army. His first post-war book was a brilliant novel, *Wind From the South*, for which he was awarded a Stalin Prize.

It is the story of a poor Finnish peasant, half farmer, half labourer, who rented his patch of land from the owner. The hero of the novel has lived a long and hard life. He took part in the war and became convinced that the Russians were not out to seize Finnish territory and were not a menace to the lives of such people as he. He becomes convinced of the falsity of the fascist government of Finland and discovers his own place in the world his right to human dignity, to liberty and labour.

PETRO VERSHIGORA was awarded a Stalin Prize for his *People With a Clear Conscience* (see *Soviet Literature* No. 2, 1946, and a review by E. Usievich in No. 12, 1946). Major-General Petro Vershigora, Hero of the Soviet Union, had been an actor on the Ukrainian stage and in 1940 graduated the Cinematographic Academy and began work as a producer at the Kiev Studios. He went to the front as a press photographer and while on this job he joined up with Kovpak's partisan column and was later appointed commander of Kovpak's Reconnaissance Service.

His *People With a Clear Conscience* is a simple but very expressive description of the inspired heroism of the Ukrainian people, the lofty ideals that led them to perform great deeds in their struggle against fascism.

VICTOR NEKRASOV earned a Stalin Prize with his first novel *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* (see *Soviet Literature* Nos. 10 and 11, 1946). The author's own experience at the front forms the backbone of the novel. Nekrasov was an actor, later he graduated the Kiev Academy of Architecture. The war took him away from his drawing board and he served as an engineer officer in the defence of Stalingrad.

His deep penetration into the psychology of his characters and the veracity of his description of the people and events of the great Stalingrad epic immediately won him the approval of readers and critics alike.

1946 STALIN PRIZE WINNERS IN LITERATURE

BORIS POLEVOY earned a Stalin Prize for *The Story of a Real Man* (see *Soviet Literature* Nos. 4 and 5, 1947). B. Polevoy was a journalist working in a big manufacturing centre. His first novel *Hot Shop*, dealing with the work of one ofthe factories in his town, was published just before the war. Immediately the war broke out Polevoy went to the front as a correspondent for *Pravda* and many of his reports from the front were reprinted all over the world.

The Story of a Real Man is the true story of Major Alexei Maresyev, Hero of the Soviet Union, who is now working in Moscow. The whole story, the youth of the hero, his training as a pilot, the catastrophe when his plane was shot down over enemy territory, the terrible journey back, the amputation of both his feet, his return to his unit with artificial limbs and his subsequent air adventures are all real facts from Maresyev's life story. The unusual real life subject and the brilliance with which Polevoy tells the story have made the book one of the most popular amongst Soviet readers.

SIMON CHIKOVANI is one of the leading Georgian poets who has always been attracted towards the heroic in life, the romance of daring. The poem for which he was awarded his Stalin Prize, *Song of David Guramishvili* is the story of an 18th-century Georgian poet and warrior. The poem consists of a number of lyrics that are not always closely connected by subject but which express a single mood, a single philosophical idea. Guramishvili was a hero of the war waged by Georgia for the liberty and independence against the Persian conquerors and Chikovani's poem brings out the historical aspirations of the Georgian people. It is a song of the friendship of the peoples, of the nobility and inflexibility of the human character, of the poet's vocation as the first of the servants of his people.

SALOMEA NERIS is a talented Lithuanian poetess. In the past she was an elementary schoolteacher but by the time Lithuania joined the Soviet Union she was already a professional writer. During the war she made frequent radio broadcasts, spent a lot of time amongst the soldiers in the front lines. She died in 1945 and her last book of poems, published a year later under the title *My Country* was awarded a Stalin Prize. Her verses express with extraordinary strength the sufferings and torment of the Lithuanian people under the German occupation and the greatness of their struggle for liberation.

ALEXANDER TVARDOVSKY is one of the greatest of the living Russian poets. His poem *Vassili Terkin* (see *Soviet Literature* No. 2, 1947) was an epic of the war. His new poem *The Roadside House*, the Stalin Prize winner, deals with the life of a peasant family on German-occupied territory. The poet not only shows all the horrors of life under fascism but also the Soviet people's faith in victory (see the review by N. William-Wilmont in *Soviet Literature* No. 10, 1946).

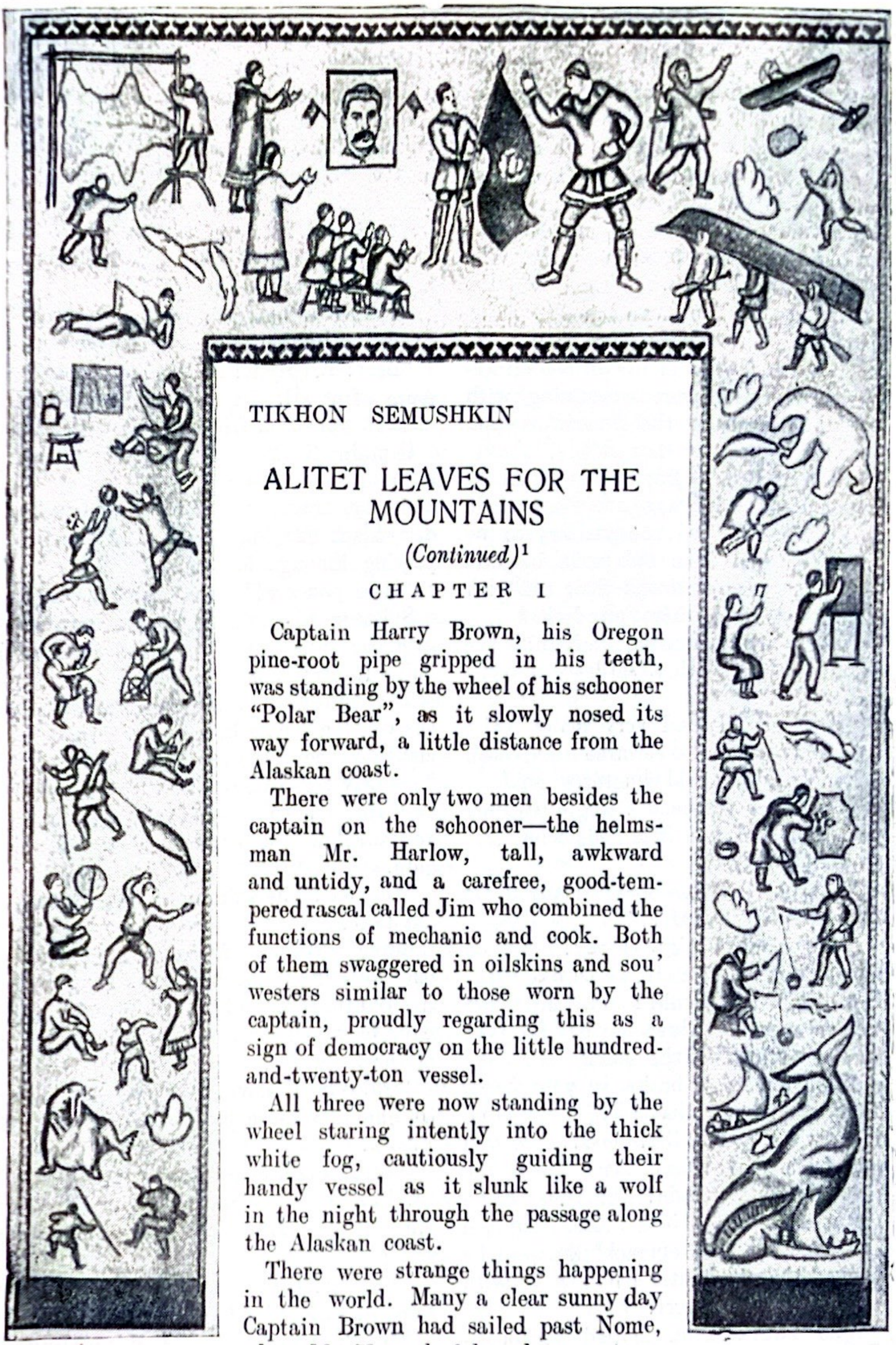
1946 STALIN PRIZE WINNERS IN LITERATURE

ANDREI MALYSHKO is another poet to win a Stalin Prize; he is a Ukrainian whose wartime poems are both lofty and mundane. In them he gives powerful expression to the idea of Soviet patriotism. Malyshko's new poem *Prometheus* is the story of a young soldier who was wounded and who was hidden by peasants in a village surrounded by the Germans. The Nazis caught him and burned him alive. The fine spirit of the young soldier who meets his death with contempt for the Nazi butchers and the heroism of the villagers who tried to save him are vividly and convincingly portrayed in Malyshko's poem.

PYOTR BROVKA is a Belorussian poet who makes good use of the folklore of his country in his exposition of modern themes. His poem *Belarus* tells the history of the country from legendary times to the victory over Nazi Germany, in which Belorussia participated on an equal footing with the other republics of the U.S.S.R. In his works Brovka is constantly searching for new forms and new genres; without departing from the fundamentals of the poetic art of the Belorussian people he is breaking new paths for the development of national poetry. *Grain*, one of the best of the poems for which he was awarded a Stalin Prize, is typical of the lyric he produces.

CONSTANTINE SIMONOV is a prominent Russian poet, author and playwright. His *Russian Question* (see *Soviet Literature* No. 2, 1947) has found a firm place in the repertoires of many Soviet theatres. Simonov's impassioned exposure of anti-democratic tendencies shown by a section of the American press makes the play of a lively interest for Soviet audiences. This play has been awarded a Stalin Prize.

AUGUST JACOBSON is an Estonian playwright. His play *Life in the Citadel* (the Stalin Prize winner) deals with the life of the Estonian intelligentsia during the German occupation and in the period of Estonia's liberation. The citadel is the home of the hero, a noted scientist who believes that he can shut himself off from all politics. The barbarous cruelty of the Nazis, however, affects this honest man to such an extent that he becomes one of the fighters against the foreign invaders.



TIKHON SEMUSHKIN

ALITET LEAVES FOR THE MOUNTAINS

(Continued)[1]

CHAPTER I

Captain Harry Brown, his Oregon pine-root pipe gripped in his teeth, was standing by the wheel of his schooner "Polar Bear", as it slowly nosed its way forward, a little distance from the Alaskan coast.

There were only two men besides the captain on the schooner—the helmsman Mr. Harlow, tall, awkward and untidy, and a carefree, good-tempered rascal called Jim who combined the functions of mechanic and cook. Both of them swaggered in oilskins and sou' westers similar to those worn by the captain, proudly regarding this as a sign of democracy on the little hundred-and-twenty-ton vessel.

All three were now standing by the wheel staring intently into the thick white fog, cautiously guiding their handy vessel as it slunk like a wolf in the night through the passage along the Alaskan coast.

There were strange things happening in the world. Many a clear sunny day Captain Brown had sailed past Nome, where Mr. Kerry had long been customs officer. They would meet like old friends:

"Howdy, Captain Brown!"

"Howdy, Mr. Kerry!"

After an exchange of courtesies, the captain would steer for the island and then calmly make his way to the grim but rich coast of the Chukotsk Peninsula. Thus it had always been.

"But some time ago this grand northern tradition went to the devil," said Captain Brown. Without rhyme or reason, perhaps the result of some kind of high politics, Mr. Kerry suddenly took it into his head to stop the contraband schooner and even turn it back. However, that was his own affair. Captain Brown was sufficiently familiar with the waters washing the shores of

[1] See *Soviet Literature*, No. 6, 1947.

that smugglers' paradise, Chukotka, to take his "Polar Bear" blindfold in a thick fog past Mr. Kerry's custom-house without disturbing his slumbers.

Soon the "Polar Bear" dropped anchor by the shore, at a place where three Chukchi yarangs stood. A large canoe immediately put out, carrying the whole population of the settlement, down to the old people and babies in arms. Who would stay ashore when there was the trading on the American schooner to be seen?

Within a few moments all had climbed aboard and were examining with boundless curiosity the Americans and the goods roped on the ship.

Captain Brown knew the Chukotsk language, and he was not stingy. He gave orders for all the visitors to be given tea and even two soda biscuits each. The hunters drank their tea with enjoyment right there on deck.

"Many white foxskins ashore?" the captain asked, with a smile of a benefactor.

"Very many! And very many white bears! There's also ermine and wolf pelts," said an old hunter.

"There has not been a single schooner yet. You are the first this summer," added another.

"Charlie-Red-Nose bought many white fox pelts this winter?"

"Very many! Very many!" replied an old hunter artlessly, as he drank the last of his tea. "I sold him all my white fox pelts. Only three are left for you. Here they are, in the sack."

"You have few brains in your head. Don't you know that Charlie-Red-Nose is a twister? Is it little goods that you get from me? Does Charlie-Red-Nose give you better trade? Eh! Your head's got nothing but a bird brain." Captain Brown concluded reproachfully, and he tapped the old hunter's bare head with a thick, curved finger.

The hunter rose, smiled apologetically, and shifting awkwardly from foot to foot, said:

"But in the winter I had to buy a rifle. There were not enough cartridges. Tobacco was finished and there was no tea."

Captain Brown went down into the small stern hold, now open. He seated himself on one of the many packing cases standing about, and with an easy movement took two dainty tablets of chewing gum out of his breast pocket. One of them he tossed over to the hunter, who neatly caught it in his mouth. Stripping the paper from the second, Captain Brown popped it into his own mouth filled with shining gold teeth. Then with a sly glance at the hunter he pulled a fat bottle of whisky from his back pocket. The Chukchi's face flushed, his eyes glistened.

"I have a bearskin in the yarang!" cried the hunter.

"Bear? All right! So you've got some sense after all. In that case I'll still look on you as a friend."

Captain Brown took a folding mug from his knee pocket.

A gay, transparent trickle of whisky descended, gurgling like a spring brook playing among the stones.

"Here you are!"

Spitting his wad of gum accurately over the side, the captain took several gulps from the bottle.

The hunter held the mug, watching the captain's mouth, savouring in anticipation the pleasure to come. Then he slowly removed his wad of gum with two fingers, squeezed it in his hand and swallowed down the whisky in one gulp.

"Go-o-od!" he said in a long drawn-out note.

Captain Brown refilled the mug, without offering anything to eat with it—and indeed, the hunter himself would have been reluctant to spoil the flavour of the firewater.

"Oh, you'll have to go a long way to find another captain like me," said Brown.

"Very good captain, very good," the hunter concurred, his speech already slurred, and then called up from the hold:

"Chovka! Bring the bearskin from my yarang, quick."

The "Polar Bear" steered northward again. There was not a ripple on the sea, and the schooner slipped swiftly along the coast. Clouds of birds rose screaming from the cliffs, disturbed by a blank cartridge. The sea was ice-free. Everything promised a good trip. Captain Brown stood by the wheel staring into the distance.

"Well, how's it starting, Captain?"

"Good enough, Mr. Harlow. That

fellow's now the owner of American goods worth eleven dollars fifty-two cents. The white fox pelts worked out at two and a half dollars apiece. The bearskin's not such a good one, but anyway, it'll be worth a bit more in America than I paid for it!"

Their full-throated, hearty laughter echoed over the deserted shore.

"What d'ye think, Mr. Harlow, if we drop anchor opposite Loren camp? That old plough horse Charles Thompson'll go clean crazy when we tell him this year's news. Of course, he likes to read his news a year old, but God damn him, we'll make him listen whether he wants to or not. He'll just have to swallow the pill, if it chokes him."

In the distance, the zinc roof of Mr. Charles Thompson's store gleamed dully.

The "Polar Bear" had hardly dropped anchor when an oared canoe shot out to meet it with much shouting and calling. Amid the hunters filling the canoe sat Charles Thompson.

"Hello, Captain Brown!" he called as he climbed the ladder.

Mr. Harlow jumped to the side, reached down a long arm and with a skillful movement heaved Mr. Thompson's heavy bulk up on deck. They made their way straight to the tiny cabin where the captain was waiting.

Mr. Thompson sank into an armchair. Captain Brown seated himself on his right, Harlow on the left. Jim, with exaggerated politeness, placed the steaming coffee and a bowl of fruit on the table.

"Help yourself, Mr. Thompson! You don't grow oranges here yet—take one, and imagine yourself back in civilization," Captain Brown invited him.

"Thanks, I'd prefer a pipeful of fresh tobacco."

After drawing the fragrant smoke deep into his lungs, Mr. Thompson jerked out:

"What's the news in America, Captain?"

"Oh, news enough," laughed the captain. "But when did you begin to be in such a hurry for the news from home? Don't you get it all in good time from the papers of a year back?"

"May die before that time comes. You need to know the news as soon as it's there, these days."

"Quite right, too, Thompson. That's the businessman's rule. Time's money! Well, I can tell you there's news enough!"

"A whole 'Beachaimo' full!" the helmsman Harlow exploded.

"In a word, Thompson, we're in a whirlpool of big international politics, and our pockets have to suffer."

Captain Brown fell silent, pulled at his pipe, then continued:

"Even here, in this godforsaken place. Who'd you think wanted it? Eh? What big businessman would want to dirty his hands with seal fat? But all the same, there are men, and big men too, who are stretching out eager hands here right now. And as for us little fish, those sharks'll just swallow us whole, without the slightest pity," and Captain Brown made a sour grimace. "You know, of course, Thompson, about the Russian revolution of 1917?"

"Oh, yes—I know about it."

"And you probably know that at first, this Russian revolution was only round about Moscow?"

"Yes, I've read the papers."

"Well, now I don't mind telling you that you're a very interesting year behind with your news. Now, in 1923, we have the honour of conversing in Bolshevik waters. Those Bolsheviks have been pretty smart, haven't they? But that's not the trouble. The trouble's somewhere else. The Bolsheviks have handed over all the trade along the Kamchatka and Chukotsk coast to the Nord Company. That's called a concession, my dear Thompson. And in no more than a month these godforsaken shores will hear the sirens of Vancouver ships. They'll be howling like jackals in the desert. Do you know that the Nord Company's 'Beachaimo' is docked right now at 'Frisco? She takes ten thousand tons freight!"

Captain Brown was silent for a moment; he filled his pipe again and sent out a cloud of smoke.

"Ten thousand tons, Thompson! That's a very different thing from my poor little hundred-and-twenty-ton 'Polar Bear!'"

Mr. Thompson had read about the concession in the newspapers, but up to this moment he had not quite believed it. It was absurd to think that the Nord Company could be interested in this district! A company with a fleet of a hundred and forty ships!

Meanwhile, Captain Brown was continuing his news.

"You know, Thompson, the Nord Company's going to set up fur trading posts here, like the Hudson Bay Company's, and stock them with real first-class goods. Judging by the American press, it'll be a trade monopoly with strictly controlled prices both for furs and trade goods. The Russian government demands it. Yes; just that—those fellows from Bolshevik Russia have taken it into their heads to control the Nord Company! And you just wait, you'll see what it'll be like here then! D'ye think those savages who've been putting butter on our bread are coming to trade with you or me if we are not ready to sell at a loss? Ho-ho! They've got a grain of sense, or at any rate, a fox's nose to tell them what trail to follow. Don't you worry about that, old man!"

Mr. Thompson removed his horn-rimmed glasses and wiped them thoughtfully. Sweat gleamed in the deep lines on his face. And it was at this moment that a brilliant idea occurred to Captain Brown—why not take advantage of the situation somehow to get his hands on the furs this old ape was sitting on?

"I've got another piece of news for you, Thompson. Your firm's representative probably won't be coming here any more. He won't want to pass Mr. Kerry's customs line illegally. You may find yourself sitting here with your furs rotting under you. It's different with us—we come at our own risk. Slip through, and that's all. But your Olaf belongs to a respectable firm."

Captain Brown rose, spat through the porthole and paced up and down the cramped "saloon".

"What shall I do with my furs?" asked the alarmed Mr. Thompson.

"You'll have to worry your way out yourself!.. And now, old friend, tell me the best place to drop anchor so as to finish this trip as quickly as possible. There's always the chance that some Soviet gunboat may look in here and take me off to a port I don't want."

Mr. Thompson rose, wiped his glasses again and said in a quiet, uncertain voice:

"Better drop anchor at Enmakai. They say Alitet's got some furs there this year."

Mr. Thompson entered the canoe with a heavy heart.

"Goodbye, Captain Brown! Hope you do good business with Alitet."

"All right, Thompson!"

The heart of the "Polar Bear" began to thud. The outspread sails caught a favouring breeze, and the schooner was borne northward, under engine and sail.

CHAPTER II

That summer a building rose near Alitet's yarang in the Enmakai settlement—such a building as only the Tangi possess. It was Alitet's store. Its walls were of white American drill stretched between posts, and let in so much light that windows were unnecessary. The roof, like that of Mr. Thompson's store, was made of grey zinc-covered corrugated iron. Even the weak rays of the sun shining through clouds were sufficient to warm it, and it was quite dry inside. From the distance it resembled a fine, large, rich house.

But the riches were within. From long walrus ribs hung four rows of white, red and silver fox pelts, and polar wolves in couples and fours—about a thousand skins. In one corner lay a pile of neatly folded bearskins. Another corner held a mountain of seal tusks and whalebone.

Alitet loved to enter his storehouse. Each time he would carefully examine the skins, shake them out by the tail. Never before had Alitet possessed such a number of pelts! Charlie had helped him to become a real trader. Alitet's eyes glistened when he thought of the big trade he would do that summer.

Today, too, Alitet had been in the storehouse several times, and always his experienced eye found some failing—either the white foxskins were not hanging in the right light, or the red foxes had not been sufficiently cleaned of fat, or the bearskins ought to be aired again. His commanding voice sounded from the storehouse and Tumatuge came running in answer to his call. He quickly took down the skins and began rubbing the insides with rye flour, to clean off the last of the fat—he had no suspicion that flour could be used to make bread.

Atteneut entered the storehouse—a young woman, Alitet's third wife. She

was the sister of his first wife, Narginaut, and Alitet had brought her home quite recently. He had taken her from Kaino, without leaving him even a bad dog in exchange.

"Tumatuge, teach Atteneut to prepare the skins. She never had a chance to learn it before. Her busband Kaino was a bad hunter, it wasn't often she had a skin in her hands."

Each of Alitet's wives had her own duties. One looked after the dogs, another the household. Tygrena had recently been given a new job—Alitet taught her to prepare food in the American way.

True, Alitet himself had only a very hazy idea of how it should be done. He bought mustard, pepper, onions and other flavourings. Plates appeared in the tent, with forks and other utensils that he had seen on Charlie's table.

Of course, nobody in the family, including Alitet himself, had any wish even to taste this Tangi food. But sometimes some Tangi would pass by and then Alitet must show that he was a real Americano. On such days Tygrena threw off her skins and put on a cloth dress. This was Alitet's wish, and he insisted on introducing this new style of living, strange even to himself.

After giving some more instructions, Alitet left the storehouse with a dignified air and made his way to the lookout standing on a rise. From here Alitet usually watched passing herds of seal and examined everything taking place out to sea. The pole planted on a rise, had evidently once been the mast of some old frigate. At its base was the skillfully carved bust of a nobleman from the time of Catherine II with a wonderfully executed wig. Now the mast was ashore, its base dug into the ground, and the nobleman's head looked out from the growing grass. Boards nailed to it formed a ladder leading to a small platform, like a crow's nest on a ship.

Alitet climbed the lookout, peered through his binoculars and suddenly bawled at the top of his voice:

"A ship! A ship!"

People came running out of the yarangs, and dogs barked, catching the infection of the general excitement.

Alitet came down from the lookout, and thrust the binoculars into Tumatuge's hands, saying:

"Look and see what ship it is!"

Tumatuge swiftly mounted the pole. Everybody would have liked to climb up, but Alitet permitted nobody except Tumatuge to use it.

In a moment Tumatuge's voice rang out.

"Alitet! The schooner's coming! Brown's coming!"

Alitet ran to the lookout.

"Look well."

"Egei!" replied Tumatuge, and stared with even greater concentration at the small vessel making her way along the coast.

"It's a schooner, Alitet. My eyes see it well. I recognize Brown. The schooner has two masts."

"When the schooner stops here," Alitet told the hunters surrounding him, "don't dare go out to her. Let the Americanos come to us on shore themselves. They have a small boat."

Having given his orders, Alitet went to his tent, where he changed his skin shirt for a checkered American one.

"Tygrena, take off your fur clothes, put on a cloth dress. Americanos are coming here now. Be quick and make reindeer soup. Only with salt, as I have taught you. Tangi do not like their food without salt. The round Tangi bowls, the iron fingers, the knives—see that everything is as Charlie has it on his table. Fry the meat without water, with only the white Tangi fat. When the Tangi begin to eat, do not take the meat with your hands, use the iron fingers."

Alitet pulled out a box where he kept onions, salt, dried mushrooms, tomato sauce, dried potatoes, pepper—heaven alone knows what kinds of food there were in that box!

"Imagine making a stew out of all that!" thought Tygrena. "Even the dogs wouldn't touch it. And why spoil good reindeer with all that mess packed in boxes?"

Tygrena looked squeamishly at the Tangi food and wrinkled her nose. It was unpleasant even to handle the stuff. With a feeling of revulsion, she picked up an onion and started cutting it right there on the floor. Suddenly a sharp pain stung her eyes, and tears began to flow. She flung the onion aside and closed her eyes, rubbing them hard with her hands.

"Why spoil reindeer meat by putting this stinking onion with it? Or that salt that corrodes the tongue and the whole mouth and makes one feel sick?"

Tygrena opened a tin of pepper and began carefully examining the black dust. Gathering up her courage, she decided to try this Tangi food, and tipped some onto her tongue right out of the tin. The next moment Tygrena dashed outside with a terrible scream, flung herself down on the ground and hurriedly began licking the grass trying to clean her tongue.

Alitet approached.

"Why are you howling like a she-wolf?" he asked indifferently.

"I tried the Tangi food," Tygrena groaned. "And it's tearing me to pieces."

"Senseless one, it is lack of custom. The Tangi eat it and they do not die. And you will become accustomed too. The schooner will soon be here. Go and prepare American food."

Tygrena's face was crimson and her mouth felt as though somebody had lighted a fire in it. She rose and returned to the tent.

The meat was already boiling in the pot. How good it smelt! This was real food. And now she had to turn it into American food and spoil it.

Tygrena threw a handful of salt into the pot, thought for a moment and then followed it with a second and a third. She brushed her hands together with distaste and wiped them on her fur boots.

She looked into the box and pondered. From which tin should she take more of the Tangi food for the pot? She emptied the contents of all of them into the stew, tried it and spat out.

"Imagine the Tangi liking disgusting food like this!"

CHAPTER III

The schooner "Polar Bear" approached Enmakai settlement at full speed. She swung jauntily round and stopped as though in a quiet reach.

"Drop anchor!" roared Captain Brown, and the same instant began lowering the anchor himself. Its flukes shining, it descended into the water at the end of its thin chain. Helmsman Harlow had already taken down the sails and stowed them. The schooner swung with the current.

The Americans walked up and down the deck, and the Enmakai people crowded on the shore, burning with curiosity. For some reason Alitet had forbidden them to go out to the schooner. Why he had made such a decision none of them could understand. It looked as though Alitet were becoming a Tangi. More and more often his actions were incomprehensible, just like those of white men.

"Why are they crowding there on the shore, devil take them? It looks as though they're not coming out to us. Jim, sound the siren!" Captain Brown ordered indignantly.

Jim seized the handle and began turning it with fury. The siren howled piercingly. Evidently this pleased the people on shore very much—they even stopped tossing pebbles into the water. But that was all.

"Probably these savages have been stuffing themselves with seal meat and they're too lazy to push out the canoe," said Mr. Harlow, falling into the captain's tone.

"Jim, lower the sloop!"

"Very good, Captain!"

Leaving the "Polar Bear" swinging at anchor, the whole crew made their way ashore.

It was only now that Alitet, who had been watching the Americans through the opening of his storehouse, emerged unhurriedly and made his way down to meet them. In his checkered shirt he stood out noticeably among the crowd. He had not forgotten to put on his American eyeshade.

"Hello, Alitet!" Captain Brown called from the sloop.

When the bows ground on the shingle, the people waiting on shore caught the sloop and pulled it up the shore, with the Americans sitting in it.

"Why didn't you come out? Got poor? Nothing to barter for my goods? Or maybe you don't need anything?" asked Captain Brown, after greeting Alitet.

"Even a stupid hunter needs goods. I need them too, and I have white fox pelts. You see my storehouse standing there?"

"Oh, it's a grand storehouse! Then

why didn't you hurry out to the schooner?"

"The canoes are fastened to the racks, it's a pity to send the whaleboat out for nothing of importance, and your boat is always ready," Alitet justified himself.

The Americans started for the camp. The whole crowd began to follow but Alitet halted them with a gesture and they returned to the shore.

"A huge storehouse!" remarked Brown. "Now I see that you're getting to be a real trader."

Alitet laughed slily, and as they approached the storehouse, he said proudly:

"Here there are many white foxes. All of them are white as snow. All have had the fat removed. If you have brought plenty of fine merchandise, then we shall do big trade. If you have little—I shall wait for the next ship."

Captain Brown pretended not to have heard what Alitet said and hastened to the door. With the first glance, the smuggler's eyes blazed at the unexpected sight that met them. Restraining his delight, Captain Brown walked unhurriedly along the line of hanging pelts with a businesslike air, shaking out a skin here and there by the tail, and turning to Alitet, threw out casually:

"There're some low-grade skins!"

"No-o-o!" replied Alitet, shaking his head with a sly smile. "My women use those to sew mittens. These pelts are the very best. Last winter many fine pelts came in. The hunters cannot remember such a winter. Even my father Korauge cannot recall such a winter. Very fine pelts!" Alitet insisted.

"O. K. You shall have many fine goods from me, Alitet. Oh, very many!" said Captain Brown, as he left the store, looking as though he had not the slightest interest in pelts.

"Well, Alitet, now come along and visit me on the schooner. And while you're there, you can see my goods."

"I want to see them here, on shore. I have stopped going out in boats. I am tired of the sea. But first come and eat in my yarang. I like very much to entertain an American man. I have ordered some good reindeer to be cooked. And the stew will be made the American way. I want very much to entertain you."

"Jim, cut off back to the schooner, quick, and bring alcohol, plenty of it. Jump to it!" the captain ordered.

"Only I want to do all the trade with you myself," Alitet told the captain. "I don't want your goods to go to other hunters. There is a hunter Vaamcho here. He has three pelts. He will certainly want to trade with you. If you trade with him, I shall close my store."

"Oh, I quite understand! What do I want with his three pelts? Some other schooner can do the trade with three pelts. I'm trading wholesale, with you."

Jim did not keep them waiting long. The Americans burst noisily into Alitet's tent and lay down on the fluffy new reindeer skins.

Tygrena, in her Tangi dress, was busy in the tent. She was very confused when the Americanos shook her hand and said something she could not understand. This was the first time she had ever shaken hands.

Soon plates, forks, spoons and a saucepan full of greasy, steaming soup appeared on the low table.

"This is grand—just like an American restaurant!" cried the captain, winking at his companions and moved closer to the table.

"Mugs!" shouted Alitet.

Tygrena bent over the table between Jim and Mr. Harlow, and began placing the large enamel mugs. Jim helped her holding her tightly about the waist.

"Jim, you beggar! If you'd only hold the end of the sail in a storm as tight as you're holding this gal!"

"I don't mind telling you, Captain, I've taken the devil of a fancy for her!"

Whisky gurgled. Captain Brown took up a mug filled to the brim and placed it in front of Alitet.

"I don't want whisky," said Alitet shrugging his shoulders. "Charlie says that a real trader drinks after business is finished. It is hunters with two or three pelts that drink before beginning to bargain! They have need to gladden their hearts. But my heart is always glad."

"What's that rubbish Charlie's been telling you! I'm a real trader, aren't I? And look, I'm going to drink too. On the contrary, a real businessman drinks before beginning to trade. I know better than Charlie," and the captain drained his mug.

Mr. Harlow in his turn pushed the whisky over to Alitet.

"Alitet wants to drink with me," he prompted him.

But Alitet, narrowing his slanting eyes, moved back, and waved the mug away.

"No—no—no!"

The Americans exchanged surprised glances.

"Looks as if that red rat Charles Thompson's been mixing it for us. This is his work."

"Yes, Sir! That's just what I think. But don't you worry, Captain, he won't hold out. I can see his mouth's watering already. Let's have something to eat, and then another drink."

Jim took a spoonful of soup, and flung down the spoon with a gasp.

"Christ, Captain, this stuff on my plate's got at least a pound of salt, pepper and mustard in it!"

"Now get this, Jim, you're not to offend this guy. You saw the skins hanging there in his store? I'd eat live mice for the sake of those," said Mr. Harlow.

"I'll put you in the hawser case for a week if you leave a drop on that plate," the captain warned Jim grimly.

"All right, Captain, and I hope you'll get through this menu alive. If I don't, send poor old Jim's body to my mother in Portland," said the cook, and seizing his plate, he began frantically swallowing the soup.

Tygrena sat in a corner of the tent, busy with some sewing. She was as inquisitive as a seal, and beneath her lashes she watched these Americans who were eating this food so eagerly. She wanted to laugh, but could find no excuse for it—you don't laugh about food.

The Americans finished off the soup. Tygrena served them with meat fried dry, which was likewise generously sprinkled with all kinds of condiments.

"Now this is real food! Cooked the American way!" said the captain encouragingly. Jim spluttered, unable to contain himself.

"Well, and now after that fine food we need a drink Alitet."

"Yes, yes. You drink, drink. I only like to serve my guests."

And again the Americans had to drink alone.

When they had finished the meal, which had driven both the Americans and Alitet himself nearly to the end of their endurance, the men left the tent, eagerly drinking in the fresh air.

Silence reigned, broken only by the occasional noisy flapping of a flight of ducks, passing along the shore in a continuous stream; there seemed to be no end to this great northward migration of birds.

Away to one side, where the ducks had to cross over a cape jutting out to sea, Alitet had hung a long net on high posts. The ducks would catch their heads in the net in their flight. They hung suspended in the invisible meshes, but the next flock, seeing the danger, flew high over the cape, avoiding Alitet's trap.

The "Polar Bear" was floating dreamily in the roadstead. The Americans once more invited Alitet to come and see the goods on the schooner, but he refused point-blank.

"No! Your trade goods are all the same. They are not like skins—one good, another bad. There is no need to look at the goods. We will trade here at once on land."

Dissatisfied, the Americans went into the storehouse. Captain Brown, silently paced around the furs. Feeling very ill after the dinner he had eaten, he looked at them in considerable

irritation. He was like some beast, snapping its teeth near a prey which it would not be very easy to take. But Captain Brown had made up his mind to get all these skins. At any price! And by any of the means he had learned in his unscrupulous life.

"What goods do you want, Alitet?"

A smile lighted Alitet's brown face. In a second he was off to the white fox pelts, and hastily pulled down two of them. He shook them out before the captain's nose and said insinuatingly:

"For these, only tobacco. Nothing but tobacco!"

"Who trades like that? We must reckon the value of all your furs, and then you will receive a great deal of goods all together. You are no stupid hunter, but a real trader."

"Yes, I am stupid. We are all stupid. And I do not know how to trade in everything at once. And I did not buy them all together, but most of them one at a time. We *will* trade a little at a time."

"You're clean crazy, Alitet! If we trade a little at a time, I shall be here a week. The ice will come and cast my schooner ashore."

"No, it won't cast it up. I know, there will be no ice yet. You must ask me about the ice. I know it very well. Wait, I will go and look at the sky and then I can tell you exactly."

"No need to go out and look," said the captain, irritated. "Mr. Harlow, go out to the ship with Jim. Get Kentucky leaf tobacco. And bring several cases of Black Navy slab tobacco and a case of chewing tobacco."

"Tumatuge, you go with them, you will help them. You can take my whaleboat now, their boat is too small to bring the goods," Alitet ordered.

The captain paced silently up and down the store. Alitet walked beside him.

"We will do a good trade, a long trade," he said. "Trading is a merry business, like a fine holiday. I shall tell Tygrena to prepare another dinner this evening like the one you had, and another tomorrow. I have food. It does not matter. I do not grudge food for a good man."

A sack of Kentucky leaf tobacco was dragged into the store.

"Here is one sack," said Captain Brown, reaching out for the pelts hanging over Alitet's shoulder.

Alitet handed over the pelts, unfastened another pair in passing, and held it out.

"More tobacco for these," he said.

Captain Brown's face fell, and he cried angrily:

"Sure, you've quite forgotten how to trade! I paid a whole sack of tobacco for two skins as an encouragement! Don't you know that that sack holds a hundred English pounds? You think Kentucky leaf tobacco lies about on the American coast and you've only to pick it up? I have to pay dollars for it!"

Alitet was not listening, he was busy with his own thoughts, reckoning how much more tobacco he needed.

"Alitet knows well that this tobacco grows on your shores like the grass in our river valleys. A great deal of it grows there! I know. Charlie told me so. . . Here, take two more skins for another sack."

The second sack was dragged in. The deal for the four skins was ended. The captain looked in horror at the skins hanging there—there were about a thousand of them, perhaps more. How long would he have to stay here bargaining with this savage for all those? But any way it was plain enough that all the goods on the ship would not be sufficient for this kind of barter.

Alitet placed one sack on the other and sat down on them. Tobacco, here it was, tobacco! The sharp smell tickled his nostrils. He opened a corner of one sack and took out a leaf. Filling his pipe with the fresh tobacco, he sighed with relief, smiled and began to smoke. Then he pulled down another couple of skins.

"Slab tobacco for these!" he said. "And then I'll see, perhaps I'll take more leaf tobacco."

Losing his temper completely Captain Brown tossed the skins to Alitet and ordered the goods to be taken back to the ship.

With something less than politeness, Jim pushed Alitet off the sacks and together with Mr. Harlow, began dragging them out of the storehouse. The smile disappeared from Alitet's face, his brows drew together in a frown, and he shouted angrily to Tumatuge:

"Dolt! Why are you standing there with your arms hanging down as though they had no bones? You should help the white men! I too will help the American men to drag their goods onto the shore!" and Alitet gripped the box.

This savage's sly politeness scattered the last shreds of Captain Brown's self-control.

"We don't need your help! We'll drag the goods ourselves!" he bawled, and seized two boxes at once.

"Oh dear, oh dear, the captain himself has to work. What a pity! As for me, another schooner will certainly come. But in the north, trade will be bad, you will have to take your goods back to America."

Alitet hopped along beside the captain, pouring sympathy into his ears.

"In the north the hunters have no skins. Those they had are now hanging in my store. But never mind. Go to them, go, you will see for yourself. Perhaps they have managed to get some black summer low-grade furs for you?"

This mockery wrought Captain Brown into a frenzy, and he ordered Alitet to be quiet. Alitet returned to his storehouse.

On the shore, the captain met Vaamcho and old Vaal. To soothe his grudge against Alitet, the captain prepared to buy those same three skins from Vaamcho about which Alitet has spoken.

"Vaamcho, you have three skins, haven't you? D'ye want me to give you these two sacks of tobacco for them?"

Vaamcho looked at the captain in bewilderment, but old Vaal smiled and said:

"Why so much? Vaamcho is no trader. We would never smoke two sacks of tobacco in all our lives."

But Jim had already loaded everything into the sloop. Barely had the Americans put off when they heard Alitet shouting as he ran after them.

"Wait! Wait!" he called.

The Americans returned to the shore, savouring the foretaste of a trade victory. Alitet ran up, panting, and taking an ermine skin from inside his shirt, said to the captain:

"Here, take this skin. I smoked a leaf from your tobacco sack."

Captain Brown pushed off in silence, and the boat left the shore.

The "Polar Bear" swung round sharply and steered for Nordcap.

Alitet climbed the lookout and watched the schooner for a long time, until it disappeared from sight.

CHAPTER IV

The midnight sun was dipping its rim in the cold sea. The whole horizon throbbed crimson. In the Enmakai settlement people slept soundly, only the children were tossing pebbles into the sea and old people wandered about near the yarangs. Their day began when it was ending for the real hunters. The sunshine of the Polar day excited the children and they raced along the shore chewing sea cabbage, or ran off into the tundra to the lakes where they could collect ducks' eggs. Of the adults, only Tumatuge was not asleep. Alitet had ordered him to sit on the lookout with the binoculars and watch for the appearance of any schooner.

Alitet tossed for a long time on the skins, unable to sleep. "It is not good that Brown is very angry. Perhaps he will tell everybody that Alitet is bad, and none of the captains will want to come to Enmakai?"

The "Polar Bear" nosed its way along the coast, its crew in an equally bad humour.

"What do you think, Captain, is it a good thing we're doing, coming back to Alitet?"

"Not much good about it, Mr. Harlow. But can you find anything better in the fix we're in? Suppose old Stefanson slips through here again on his 'Yukon'? He's got a nose for trade, that Stefanson, you know, he's a real descendent of the old pirates. For centuries they've sailed all the oceans. They've had their hands on everything, in all parts of the world. God damn it, he'll never let that storeful slip through his fingers! And then don't forget, that devil Alitet was telling the truth all right. I guess he really has got all the skins from all the coast hunters."

At midnight Alitet heard Tumatuge's voice.

"Alitet, a schooner is coming!"

Alitet jumped up with the agility of a youth. Dressing hastily, he ran to the lookout.

"Brown's coming back!" cried Tumatuge, pointing out to sea.

With a commanding gesture Alitet summoned Tumatuge down from the lookout and quickly climbed it himself. What he saw from the top filled him with such wild triumph that he nearly fell down. A broad smile spread over his cunning face.

"I have gone to sleep," he said. "Let nobody waken me! Only if the Americanos themselves come ashore and go to my tent, then let them waken me."

Inside his tent Alitet undressed completely, and soon his even, peaceful snoring could be heard in the yarang.

The "Polar Bear" dropped anchor in the old place, and the Americans at once lowered the sloop and rowed ashore.

"Where is Alitet?" asked Captain Brown.

"Alitet is sleeping. He ordered nobody to disturb him... But if you wish, you can waken him," Tumatuge replied.

"O. K.," said the captain glumly, and he made his way to Alitet's tent.

"A-a-ah! Brown!" said Alitet, rubbing his eyes. "Brown has come back. I like Americanos very much."

"You are right, Alitet. I went to Yakan Cape, but the hunters had no more skins. They had nothing to trade with."

"I know, I told you. I like meeting American man very much," said Alitet, and turning to Tygrena gave his orders: "Quick, quick, make American soup! The same as yesterday, while we go to the storehouse."

"Captain Brown!" Jim implored. "Let me help this gal with the soup or she'll make us eat that devil's mess again."

"O. K.—Alitet, my Jim will help your wife prepare the food. He is also my cook."

"Oh, oh, how fine! Let Jim teach Tygrena. I am tired of explaining all that woman's work."

Jim and Tygrena were left in the tent. Jim pulled a chef's cap out of his pocket, put it on and struck such a comical attitude that Tygrena burst out laughing. Then he took off the cap, put it onto Tygrena's head and suddenly slipped his arm round her.

Tygrena shook with fury, and her eyes blazed. She tore herself free, picked up a piece of reindeer meat dripping with blood and struck Jim in the face with it, with all her strength.

"Oho-ho!" said Jim, wiping the blood from his face. "A fine poultice. Looks as though neither the captain nor I are in luck this trip!"

Tygrena understood nothing of what Jim was saying.

"All you Tangi are like mad dogs," she snapped. "That Red-Nosed Charlie, too, made me stupid that time... But Aye fought him and taught me how to fight you."

Although he understood nothing of what Tygrena was saying, Jim could see that she was thoroughly angry, and smiling uncertainly, he sat down on the skin.

Tygrena silently pushed the reindeer meat over towards Jim and threw him a knife. Jim took it, examined it and showed by gestures that it was too small. He pulled out his Remington knife, cut off a piece of meat and began beating it so vigorously that Tygrena had to laugh as she watched him. She thought the young American was making magic. That was how Korauge beat his drum.

"Come here! I'll teach you to make tender steak. Come here, come here," Jim invited her with gestures.

Tygrena came.

Jim took another piece of meat, and handing her a knife, told her:

"Try to do the same."

Tygrena hammered with the knife and laughed, not understanding why she should beat the reindeer meat so hard.

Jim looked at Tygrena, and for the first time the thought struck him: "What beasts we are! After all, they're human beings too."

CHAPTER V

Trade with Alitet lasted for a long time. At the end of the third day a mountain of goods stood in the storehouse. Many of the hunters, and even the women, gladly dragged in the sacks and cases, and all smoked fresh tobacco till their heads swam.

Alitet crawled over the pile, carefully examining every case, every sack, mulling over in his own mind: "What is still lacking here? My head will burst with thinking."

Then Alitet would rise, pull down another couple of white fox pelts, and

ask for more tobacco, cartridges, whisky, red bunting, beads, knives, needles, traps, Winchesters, and all the many things necessary for hunters.

"Hell, Captain, this sly-eyed devil's going to skin us alive! I swear he will!" said Jim, dragging in a load of trade goods.

"Don't worry, Jim. So far everything's all right. He's caught by the general good mood, he's sitting on top of the world, he's feeling good and you can talk him round," Captain Brown reassured his companions.

White, red and silver foxes were gradually transferred into Captain Brown's canvas sacks. But the "Polar Bear"'s hold was emptying too. Beaming with satisfaction Alitet passed his hands over the goods, slapped the Winchesters lovingly and continued to pile up more and more. Never before had Enmakai seen such a holiday!

At the end of the fifth day burly Jim announced:

"Captain Brown, there's nothing left on the "Polar Bear" but part of the crew—two rats. And they've got enough room to run races in!"

Captain Brown looked with chagrin at the remains of the furs, the bearskins, the seal tusks and the whalebone.

"The trade goods on the schooner are finished, Alitet. There is nothing left on board," and slapping him on the back the captain asked: "Well, how about it, satisfied with the trade, Alitet?"

"Ve-ry good! Very satisfied!"

"Do you want to trade with me the same way next year?"

"Oh, oh, I want it very much! I want to trade only with you."

"Captain Brown, it gives me a pain to see all that's left here, honest it does."

"Keep out of this, Jim! I've got an idea."

"And now I ve-ry much want you to dine with me. The food is prepared. Tygrena has learned very quickly how to work with Jim. Come into the tent!"

"O. K. Let's go," Captain Brown agreed willingly. "And you are right, Alitet. It is very good to drink whisky after business is finished."

"Yes, yes. Now we can drink. It is very good! Now we can drink a great deal. My heart has long been asking for the firewater."

Jim was busy in the tent with Tygrena again. He was gay and cheerful, handled the work better than any woman, and made Tygrena laugh till the tears came. And the food he prepared was not so revolting as what she had made herself. In general, he began to be like a real person. So thought Tygrena.

The Americans and Alitet sat down to table. The two sister wives, Narginaut and Atteneut, slipped into the tent. Alitet shouted at them, and they disappeared in a second, full of envy and malice towards Tygrena.

The first mugs of whisky were drunk. Mr. Harlow refilled them. Spirits rose. The drink began to go to Alitet's head; with thickened tongue he boasted:

"Alitet is right. Alitet is always right. I said that there would be no ice, that the schooner would not be driven ashore. We could trade for a long time yet, and the ice would not come."

"That's right, that's right, Alitet! You know all about it," Captain Brown flattered him. "We could trade for a long time yet... You know what I want to say, Alitet? The rest of those furs, the bearskins, the tusks and whalebone in your storehouse should be loaded onto the ship! If there's a storm, an empty ship rides badly. It may overturn, and we'll all be drowned. And after all, I shall have to bring you goods next year too."

Alitet pricked up his ears.

"Would you like me to write you a paper and next year we will do a separate trade for the paper? That's what businessmen always do," said Captain Brown, seriously and convincingly.

Alitet pondered. But recalling that Charlie also traded with papers, and looked upon those papers as real goods, he jumped up and said quickly:

"Wait, I will first run and count how many pelts still remain."

"You're a genius, Captain!" cried Harlow.

"Wait a bit, wait a bit, keep quiet and don't scare the bird," the captain warned him. And the Americans said nothing until Alitet returned.

"Two hundred and thirty skins! Write a paper!" cried Alitet, running in.

Captain Brown pulled a notebook out

of his breast pocket and slowly, as though performing some sacred rite, unscrewed the cap of his fountain pen.

Alitet carefully watched the captain "working" on paper. But his scrutiny troubled the captain little. He wrote:

"Goodbye, you sly-eyed devil! You've given me a fine bellyache these five days. Damn you and whoever it was that taught you to trade like that. Don't worry about the bearskins, you devil, there'll be buyers for them in America. Goodbye again and for ever. Signed: Taki Black Beetle."

"Here, Alitet, the paper is ready," said Captain Brown solemnly.

Alitet folded the paper carefully and put it into the pocket of his checkered American shirt.

Soon the "Polar Bear" was slipping gaily along towards the Alaskan coast. Captain Brown came out of the cabin and went towards the wheelhouse where helmsman Harlow was on watch. The captain was holding a leaf from his notebook covered with figures.

"Stripped us like a lime sapling!" he announced, laughing loudly. "God damn, those white foxskins come out at over six dollars apiece."

Jim appeared in the engine room door.

"All the same, it's a pity we're not coming back here next year, Captain. I'd be real glad to see that coast again."

"To visit Alitet's wife?"

"That's right. But you're all wet if you're thinking anything bad of her, Captain. It's queer, but the way she acted, she's made me feel that we're pretty rotten swine, when all's said and done."

"What?" bawled Captain Brown.

CHAPTER VI

For two nights running the shaman Korauge beat his drum to celebrate the good trade his son had done with the Americans. His great joy and the need to thank the spirits even deprived the shaman of the chance to drink the fire-water. He drummed and wove his incantations with much ardour. Meanwhile Alitet, no longer trying to restrain himself, drank for two days on end. He was exhausted from the long and difficult trade. But to make up for it Enmakai camp was now to have a real, large trading yarang like Red-Nose Charlie's. And the owner of that trading yarang was Alitet himself.

Two days previously, five lads had raced into the mountains with news for the nomad hunters of Alitet's big trade. They ran without stopping to rest on the way, each one anxious to be the first bearer of such good tidings. Bringing news like this, they would be greeted like old friends and feasted with the best reindeer meat. Who could say, the reindeer breeders might even be generous enough to give them reindeer skins for winter clothes.

On the evening of the fourth day, people began to arrive from the mountains, carrying long staves with waterproof sealskin sacks on their backs. But there were no furs in the sacks—Alitet had collected all the white and red fox pelts in the spring.

People also came to Enmakai who had not yet given Alitet anything. But their need for goods was great, and they hoped that Alitet would not refuse them.

Never before had Enmakai settlement been so full of life and movement. Crowds of people collected everywhere. There was tea boiling in a huge cauldron, and everybody could drink as much as he wanted, and with sugar, at that! People talked about how the reindeer had calved, and exchanged all the news from their camps—there was no end to the talk.

At midday trade began. Alitet opened his store, and everybody crowded into the narrow doorway. Alitet told them to choose what they wanted—let each one reckon what was necessary and how much he could carry. Nothing was weighed, nothing was controlled, each man took what was really necessary, and nobody took more. All that was taken would be remembered, and if Alitet should ask two years later who had taken what, everything would be recited, down to the last needle, the last box of matches!

There was only one restriction — each had to take not less than five traps from Alitet's store.

Away to one side there stood a small box of slab tobacco. Everybody went up to it, and cut off a pipeful, and smoked.

Inside the storehouse all were smoking, and the grey clouds belched forth from the doorway as from the funnel of a steamer. Those who preferred to chew,

went to another box. In the mountains people could never smoke and chew their fill, tobacco had to be spared. Now who could deny that this was a real holiday?!

Hunters who had not yet caught any white foxes also selected their goods. After all, they would catch them sometime, wouldn't they? And Alitet told them:

"Take all you need, take it! Only don't forget the traps. If you have no white fox pelts next year, you'll give me them later on, when you catch them."

Alitet knew each hunter by sight. He was in high spirits as he mingled with the crowd. People selected their goods unhurriedly, stowed them in sacks and moved aside.

Alitet's heart brimmed with joy as he looked at this great trade. But in the winter it would be still better, when he would seat himself on his sledge and again race round all the camps, collecting all the white and red fox pelts. He would not even look at them, but simply say: "Pile them up on my sledge!"

Alitet called Tumatuge.

"There are many guests in our settlement," he said. "Let them be fed with meat in all the yarangs. Let them go in fives, in tens. And let meat be given out from my pit."

"Ege!" cried Tumatuge, and ran to the yarangs to pass on Alitet's orders.

Trade came to an end. All the men had filled their sacks with merchandise and left the storehouse.

Soon they were crowding into the yarangs, calling gaily to one another. The most important reindeer herders went to Alitet.

CHAPTER VII

The summer of 1923 was a particularly good one for Polar navigation. Clear water extended along the whole coast, and the heavy masses of ice, driven by the south wind, retreated far away to the north.

The S. S. "Soviet" was the first to pass the Bering Strait, on its way to the Kolyma coast.

The head of a special service unit, Tolstukhin, was standing by the rail of the "Soviet"; beside him stood Los, a representative of the Kamchatka revolutionary committee, the Revkom, who had been assigned to the Chukotka region.

"Here you are, Los, take a look at your district. You go ashore today. When we enter the Strait, you'll see your residence," said Tolstukhin.

"So I shall soon be meeting my Martians?"

"What Martians?"

"Well, what else are they? They live here as though they were on another planet."

"Yes, that's right. You've got a whole country of over two thousand kilometres before you. Get busy with it!"

Los was a man built on a huge scale, slow in speech and movement. He had only a very vague idea of the district, and now, standing on the "Soviet", he intently examined this bare, stony, lifeless land.

The Bering Strait was like some huge lake, with the hunters' leather canoes racing about on it. Their homes were perched on the very edge of the stony cliffs, hanging like birds' nests among the huge boulders.

It seemed a strange and uncomfortable place for dwellings. But the hunters were used to it, and loved the place. Every boulder, every salient, every slope of the hills was familiar to them from childhood. With the agility of mountain goats, the inhabitants of these parts slipped up and down the slopes in their soft footwear. Had there been no boulders here, it would be dull walking about the level stretches.

Then, walrus hunting was always good along the Strait. It was like a gateway through which the herds of walrus passed on their way to the Arctic Ocean. And where there are walrus, there man can live in plenty. This was the rim of the world. From here, northeast, beyond the Strait, the dim outlines of the Alaskan mountains could be seen.

The mist lifted, and the midnight sun appeared. The silent grey patches of the Chukotsk yarangs could be seen clinging to the shore.

"It's bad that I haven't learned anything about this district before," said Los. "It's a huge district—four hundred thousand square kilometres!"

"My good man! Who in the world do you think could have taught you anything about this region?"

"Last winter a young fellow left Petropavlovsk with a dog team for these parts," said Los. "A useful sort of fellow. He studied in the Geographical Institute. He learned the Chukotsk language from an old professor. I felt pretty bad when I saw him set off on such a long journey alone. Who knows whether he ever got here or not?"

"Yes, Los, there's not a spot on all this huge territory from where you can send a radiogram. When anybody lands here, you really can say that he's disappeared as though the earth had swallowed him."

Islands appeared in the distance—two huge rocky piles.

"The captain says that one of them's ours, the other—the smaller one—American," said Los, his keen eyes peering into the distance.

"Well, Comrade Los, it'll soon be time to say goodbye," said the captain. "Maybe I'll look in on the way back, if the ice doesn't crush me."

Very soon the "Soviet" was in the roadstead, dropping anchor opposite a large settlement of yarangs. The steamer's siren sounded. A canoe swiftly shot up to the vessel.

"Los, Los, come here! Here are some of your Martians!" said Tolstukhin.

Los ran to the starboard. The first thing he saw was Zhukov, sitting among the hunters in the canoe. A joyful smile lit up his face and he shouted at the top of his voice:

"Andryushka! You're alive! That's grand! Come aboard quick!"

"Right away, right away, Nikita Sergeyevich," Zhukov replied, and clambered up the ladder.

Los grabbed him, clapped him in a bear's hug, then letting him go at last, stepped backward and flinging out his arms, cried:

"Well, well! I feel as if I'd come home when I see you standing there!"

"I've been expecting you a long time, Nikita Sergeyevich. Got tired of waiting."

"And those people who came out with you?"

"They're friends, Nikita Sergeyevich, I've got a lot of friends here already. They're grand folk!"

"Splendid, splendid! Well, scout, let's go and get acquainted with them."

CHAPTER VIII

Winter had not yet set in, but heavy ice had already blocked the Strait. The Polar summer disappeared as though it had never been.

Snow fell heavily, the wind swept down from the north, and blizzards raged. Huge snowdrifts buried the dwellings.

Among the yarangs a square building had risen belonging to the Revkom representatives. Its shape caused the snow to cling to it more than to the circular yarangs and soon it was quite snowed under, and the smoke coming from the chimney seemed to be issuing straight from beneath a snowdrift.

"Well, it's a good thing to have the snow over us," said Zhukov. "We haven't the fuel to heat the place properly, and this way it's much warmer."

The S. S. "Soviet" had been in a hurry to reach Kolyma, and there had been no time to unload everything needed for the Revkom. The captain had promised to finish unloading on the return journey. Now there was no possibility of learning anything about the ship. Either it had passed by, or it was frozen up somewhere.

The back part of the hut was the living quarters where two beds stood side by side, separated only by a stool and closed off by a curtain of bright gingham.

The office looked more dignified. Here stood two writing tables, two bentwood chairs and a homemade bench. Beside the door a medium-sized cupboard stood against the wall, fastened with a large padlock and a seal. This was the letter box. Over the slip a letter was painted with a model "address" in a copperplate writing:

PETROPAVLOVSK, KAMCHATKA,
Provincial Revkom.
Representative of Kamchatka Provincial Revkom for Chukotsk Region, No. 123.

This huge letterbox was to be opened only during the navigation season.

It was cold in the Revkom. Coal was used only for cooking. Los was sitting at his table, wearing a reindeer jacket and wide fur trousers. An old Red Army helmet hugged his head

and a reddish spade-shaped beard covered his chest. Los was pondering intently, head down. Occasionally he would raise his head, and then his lively blue eyes flashed from beneath shaggy brows.

Zhukov was pacing up and down the small room, talking about the local people. He too was dressed very warmly. His fur torbazes were fastened to his belt, and a warm foxskin cap with long flaps reaching down to his waist made his tall figure look even taller.

"So it works out that connections with Petropavlovsk by dog team are possible?"

Zhukov laughed.

"Of course. I came here that way. But it's of no practical use. I travelled for four months."

Los chewed his beard for a moment.

"Well, devil take it!—how are we going to live here?" he said. "From one ship to the next? We'll have to apply for a wireless station. . . Well, Andryusha, go on, tell me some more."

Again pacing up and down the room, Zhukov continued:

"This region was organized for administration only just before the Revolution. Dyadyenko, the tsarist representative in the district, tried to set up a system of village elders here in 1915, but nothing came of it. He was more interested in furs and drank like a fish. And his Cossacks weren't far behind him in that. Dying of delirium tremens in 1916, Dyadyenko gave orders that they should bury him at the entry to Providence Bay, so that, as he said, he could see the passing ships. This region was governed according to an unwritten law and by the arbitrary orders of a handful of 'cunning traders," Zhukov continued. "There are also people who have come over from Alaska living here. The traders are of all nationalities—Norwegians, Danes, Americans, Latvians, Ossetians, Russians, Ingushi, Ukrainians. There's a German, and there's an Austrian Baptist, a former war prisoner. Many of them have married Chukchi women or Esquimoes, and settled down here. They use their connections with their own countries mostly for purposes of trade. The local kulaks are their go-betweens with the nomad reindeer breeders. Each one of them lives shut off from the people, and mixes only with men from the Alaskan schooners."

"Never mind! We'll clear out all this riffraff, Andryusha."

Los tipped a little coal sparingly into the stove, and stirred the fire.

"You know, Nikita Sergeyevich, one thing that's struck me forcibly here is these people's extraordinary love for children. They talk to them as they do to adults. And the strangest thing they even ask their advice at times. Many of the hunters and the old people have made friends with me just because they saw how well I got on with the kiddies."

Los was also fond of children, and they soon began to feel at ease with this bearded man. They would fling themselves onto him in crowds, shouting:

"*Los Russin! Los Russin!*"

He would seize some little boy in his huge hands, swing him high in the air and shake him a little. And the women, watching this unusual play from the doorways of their yarangs, would laugh at the sight hiding their faces in the wide sleeves of their fur shirts.

Notwithstanding his kindliness and apparent calm, Los was a man of strong will, swift decisions and resolute actions. He carefully listened to everything told him by his young friend Andrei, who, as he knew, had been studying this region for a long time, and was clearly at an advantage, knowing the life and language of the coast dwellers.

Los was tormented by his ignorance of the language.

A group would gather in some large yarang, and until after midnight talk would go on with continual translations back and forth.

The next day the news gathered from such a talk would fly up and down the coast, like an oral newspaper. The local "torbaz telegraph" flew from camp to camp, from hunter to hunter with incredible speed. People living far from the coast who had never yet seen the Russian chief already knew a great deal about him.

The whole day, and often at night too, Los studied the Chukotsk language with grim determination. The notebook containing his vocabulary was so thick that he often had to search a long time for the word he needed. Then Los worked out a method of his own for arranging the words and phrases, and rewrote the whole vocabulary. In one notebook he had separate words in alphabetical order, in another, phrases under various

headings, such as "Every-day conversation," "Conversation on trade," "Conversation about dogs," and many others.

Los was the first to waken in the morning. He would call his secretary:

"Andryusha! Time to get up! You'll sleep yourself into a scurvy!" Then, still in his fur sleeping bag, with only his head emerging, covered with a warm cap, he would begin his working day.

"Come on, Andryusha, let's study!"

The lesson would begin—klyaul—man, neuskat—woman, gaimychilen—rich, vyletkurken klyaul—trading man, and so on.

"Well, how about it, Andryusha?"

"Grand, Nikita Sergeyevich! I can tell you you're getting on better than I could ever have expected!"

"You wait a bit, lad! Soon I'll be lecturing in Chukotsk. What's 'go away' in Chukotsk?"

"Kanto."

"Well, kanto, then! Go and get hold of some sledges. Today we're going along the coast to elect camp committees and tribal councils. And while you're making arrangements, I'm going to bake some biscuits. We're forgetting the taste of bread."

"I've heard that all his life here Thompson's been baking bread on a 'lightning' lamp. I wanted to try it but never had time," said Zhukov.

Los slipped into his furs and poked out the stove.

"Kanto, kanto, quick!" he said, smiling. "I shan't forget that word!"

CHAPTER IX

Mr. Simons was lounging in a rocking chair in Mr. Thompson's room, smoking fragrant Capstan. Simons was the Nord Company representative, carrying out all the duties at the trading post. He was fur buyer, salesman, storehouse keeper and clerk, and, in his opinion, one man was more than enough for the work here—in fact, he was depressed by lack of occupation. Simons was a fair-haired, dried-up looking man of thirty, with a cold, supercilious expression and dull eyes. He found the district and everything in it revolting, and often cursed himself for having allowed big money to tempt him to this savage country. He loathed the hunters—their clothing, their smiling faces. He was secretly glad to find that they did not come very often to his trading post. On entering his house or storehouse, Mr. Simons would pull his handkerchief out of his pocket, and wrap it round the door handle before touching it.

Winter had closed in, and Mr. Simons had long been bored almost beyond endurance. It was three months since the S. S. "Beachaimo" had landed him on the coast together with a swiftly erected house, a storehouse and trade goods for the post. He would have been ready to kill himself for sheer boredom in these months had it not been for the company of Charles Thompson, the only cultured man there. It was the greatest good fortune that he had been held up for another year. At least, there was somebody to talk to during the long winter evenings.

Every morning, on awakening, Mr. Simons dressed leisurely and went to Mr. Thompson's hut. Even a blizzard did not stop him. A rope had been stretched between the two buildings, and Mr. Simons followed that rope till it brought him to his destination.

He had his meals with Mr. Thompson. In the morning they would drink coffee and eat tinned fruit. Then Mr. Simons would listen to Mr. Thompson's stories, on Sundays they would turn on the gramophone, play patience, and thus they passed the long northern winter by the light of a paraffin lamp. On leaving Mr. Simons would say with a laugh:

"Goodbye, Thompson, time's money, you know!"

One day, when Mr. Simons had brought over some whisky for supper they talked for a long time like old friends.

"Mary!" Charlie called, "Bring in some more coffee."

Mary was surprised—it was always her mother who brought in the coffee. She slipped on a dress and entered the room.

"Get a cup for yourself. Sit down here at the table with us. It's Sunday today," said her father.

Never before had Charlie invited his daughter to sit at table with him. Mary was lost in confusion. She stood there, not understanding what she was meant to do.

"Sit down, sit down," and her father took her hand.

"You've got a very pretty daughter,

Thompson," said Simons drily. "Doesn't she speak English?"

"No," replied Charles Thompson reluctantly.

The gramophone continued to grind out tunes.

Mr. Simons could not take his eyes off Mary, who hastily drank a cup of coffee, then suddenly jumped up and ran out.

"Where are you going, Miss Mary? We must have a dance!"

But Mary had already disappeared through the door.

"She can't dance, Simons."

"Time she learned, then. A girl ought to be able to dance. I can teach her. . . ."

They lit up fresh pipes of Capstan and smoked in silence.

"Well, Simons, what were we talking about? Oh, yes—you know, I just can't get the hang of why Nord Company's wanting a monopoly trade here? After all monopoly wipes out competition, but it's competition that makes for trade."

"You're right enough there, Thompson, but you're forgetting one thing: we have to do with the Russian ministry of trade. Everything's monopolized in Soviet Russia now. There are only a few private traders left there." Mr. Simons rose and spread out his hands with a hopeless gesture. "There's nothing we can do. Got to fall into line. We're not the masters here."

"How in the world are businessmen going to live in Russia?"

Simons shrugged his shoulders in perplexity.

That evening their talk took a particularly friendly and intimate turn.

"What are your plans for the future, Thompson?"

"In the summer I shall probably go to America."

"Well, naturally. In general, I just can't understand how you could have spent half your life here. In this little room, no automobile, no bath, no flowers. I just can't understand it. . . My wife died, I've no children, and that's the only reason I came here—it's big money after all. But God forbid that I should stop for another year! And you—half a lifetime—the very thought's horrible."

"I'm used to it, Simons. Is it long since you lost your wife?"

"Two years. I'm all alone in the world now. I'll get a bit of money together here, then I'll go to Canada and start some sort of a business. I suppose you must have a good bit laid away for your old age, Thompson, if I'm not prying into your private secrets?"

Thompson was silent for a moment. "Look here, you're a good guy, I've taken a fancy to you," he said. "It's a real pleasure, having you here this year. You're the right sort, and I don't mind being frank with you."

Charles Thompson rose and went towards the cupboard but stopped and turned back.

"You're the first man except the bank clerks to know how much I've got."

He unlocked the cupboard and took out a package of papers. With trembling hands he spread them out on the table and said with some emotion:

"You won't take advantage of an old man's frankness, will you?"

Mr. Simons quickly pulled his chair up to the table.

"Here, take a look: in one bank, a hundred thousand dollars, not counting interest. The same in another. And thirty-seven thousand in a third. Not a cent more anywhere."

Mr. Simons gasped.

"Thompson! That means you've a quarter of a million!" he whispered.

"No, Simons," sighed Charles Thompson, "I wanted to bring it up to a quarter of a million, but I didn't get there!"

"Well, you're only some thirteen thousand short. It's nothing!"

"All the same. I wanted the round figure."

Thompson replaced the papers in the safe and asked:

"What about some more coffee?"

"No, thanks, Thompson, it's late."

That night Mr. Simons lay awake for a long time. "Suppose I marry Mary?" he thought.

CHAPTER X

The fur trading post stood on the shore, like Charles Thompson's building. Mr. Simons' apartment was connected with the store by a narrow passage. Things were arranged so that the Nord Company representative had everything within reach. The store was filled with trade goods, and Mr. Simons had long since put everything into perfect order.

Mr. Simons did not know a word of Chukotsk, and had no intention of learning it, although he did know a few words of Russian. When he had to trade he used Yarak as interpreter.

Together, they rearranged the goods in the store, and then Mr. Simons closed the post and went to Thompson. After a good dinner Thompson went out and told his daughter:

"Mary, today you go to Mr. Simons to learn to dance."

"I won't go to Sime! I don't need to learn. I can dance better than Sime," she replied boldly.

"You're the daughter of an American father! You must know how to dance the American way and not like a savage!"

After issuing his orders, Charles Thompson returned to the room. At that moment Yarak entered.

"The bearded Russian chief has come," he said. "He is standing there by the sledge."

Mr. Simons hastened home. Beside the post two sledges were standing, surrounded by a crowd of hunters.

"Hey! Mr. Los! Governor!" Mr. Simons shouted from the distance, and approaching shook hands heartily with Los and Zhukov.

"How do, how do, Mr. Simons! It's a long time I've not seen you, not since the summer," said Los.

"Come in, come inside. As for your dogs, you know better than I do where to fix them up."

"I will look after the dogs," said Yarak.

"See that they're well fed," Andrei requested.

"I will feed them very well!"

The wooden American house looked like a solid building, meant to last. The rooms were clean, spacious and comfortable, with convenient furniture, shining new. A brown bearskin was spread on the floor beside Mr. Simons' bed, and a snow-white bearskin, a present from Charles Thompson, was flung over an armchair. Zhukov saw American magazines lying on the writing table and dived into them.

Los walked about the room, examining it from floor to ceiling. He tapped the wall, and enquired ironically:

"Warm?"

"Grand, Mr. Los!"

"Clever folks, you Americans! The agreement was made out for three years, and the building's meant to last just so long—not a day more and not a day less. The agreement comes to an end, and the house collapses."

"No, you're wrong, Mr. Los—this is a good, strong house—it'll last twenty years!"

"Twenty years! Why, if I just hunch my shoulders the wall will come down. That's not the way we build in Russia."

"Oh, well, you could push down an elephant, I guess. But this house is of two-inch boards, faced with cardboard and papered."

While he was talking, Mr. Simons had been lighting the stove, slicing bacon, putting out butter, and laying the table with a great rattling of plates, knives and forks. His hands worked swiftly and surely.

"According to the agreement, the Nord Company was to put up not only trade posts here but schools and hospitals," said Los, as though speaking to himself. "Are they to be made of planks too?"

Mr. Simons halted in the middle of the room, his hands full of plates.

"But Mr. Los, you know yourself that the 'Beachaimo' was loaded with the trade post buildings and trade goods. Of course, it's true that our firm has a big fleet and could have sent another ship, but this was the first Arctic trip. It's experimental. The Nord Company's a firm of good standing, Mr. Los, and you may be sure that by next year the buildings provided for in the agreement will be standing on the coast. . . Come and sit down," Mr. Simons concluded with an inviting gesture towards the table..

While the Revkom members were eating, they discussed various business matters, and then Mr. Simons conducted them to the trading post and storehouse.

Los examined ammunition and Winchesters, excellently packed, he sniffed aromatic tobacco and admired fine ladies' underwear. Slabs of tobacco, both smoking and chewing were wrapped in silver paper like chocolate with wax paper outside. There was an abundance of pots and pans, and all kinds of manufactured goods.

"And here's the price list," said Mr. Simons pointing to a notice hanging

on the wall. "This is for furs and raw material, and this is for trade goods."

Los went to the wall and began to read: "Brick tea—but where's the price?"

"The paper got torn off just where the price was."

In another moment Simons had pulled out his portable typewriter with Russian lettering and filled in the prices there on the counter.

"Brick tea—1 ruble; Winchester—80 rubles; cartridges—20 for 2 rubles; flour—40 lbs. for 7 rubles."

The list was a long one and it took Los some time to go through it.

"Very good! And this is for furs?" he asked. "White fox first grade—40 rubles; white fox second grade—32 rubles; blue fox first grade—80 rubles; seal—1 ruble."

Los examined the whole price list, then went to the counter and sat down on a sack of brick tea. The Nord Company representative watched his every movement.

"All this is very fine, but it's no use," said Los sighing. "There's not a single hunter who's literate. Who's going to read this price list?"

Simons shrugged his shoulders, looking down.

Yarak entered the store followed by five hunters.

"Later, later, clear out now," said Mr. Simons in Russian waving them back to the door.

"Never mind, Mr. Simons, let them take a look round. They won't disturb us," Andrei Zhukov checked him.

"They need a live price list, Mr. Simons, not a dead one," said Los.

"I don't understand."

"Well, here's, let's say, a sack of brick tea—eighty bricks. That costs eighty rubles. Put two white foxes at forty rubles on top of it. And a Winchester—put two skins on that. A package of twenty cartridges—two sealskins, they cost a ruble and the cartridges—two rubles. Anybody can understand that, even an illiterate hunter."

"Mr. Los, the trading season has not begun yet. I've only bought twenty white foxskins so far. I've got nothing to make such a price list with."

"Quite enough, give them here!"

Los flung off his fur shirt and began sorting out the cases and opening the sacks of brick tea; soon an unusual price show was arranged all along one side of the store. Meanwhile, Zhukov explained to the hunters that they could take forty bricks of tea for one white foxskin. The hunters were thunderstruck—who had ever heard of such a thing?

"Kakomei, kakomei," they cried in amazement.

They swiftly dispersed among the yarangs, ran to the places where they had concealed their furs until such time as the trader would be in a good temper and feeling generous, and returned to the store.

One hunter handed Los two white foxskins, asking:

"Can I have a Winchester for these?"

"Of course you can," Zhukov replied. "But Los isn't a trader. He has only given orders how trade is to be. Give the skins to him," and he pointed to Simons.

Mr. Simons took the skins, examined them, shook them out and pulled them.

"Very good skins. What does he want?" Simons asked, and on receiving an answer gave the hunter a 30-30 calibre Winchester in a carton.

The hunter took the gun, looked round at everybody and asked:

"But am I not in debt for this rifle? Will he not want more pelts for it later?"

"No, everything's paid. Here, look, it's shown here by the wall," and Zhukov again began to explain the price list in kind.

Trade went with a swing. Hunters came running from the yarangs with their white fox pelts to trade in the new way. The story of it flew through the whole settlement and up and down the coast, the most important piece of news for a long time.

"You see, Mr. Simons, and you said that the hunting season had not begun. Wait a bit, I'll travel along the coast and you'll be snowed under with furs. It's easily explained—up to now nobody ever traded fairly with them, the way you intend to do," added Los with a faintly ironic inflection.

"Well, I'm certainly grateful to you, Mr. Los. You've been a great help in organizing trade here."

After spending the day in the fur factory's store, the Revkom members returned to Mr. Simons' room.

"All the same this is a barbarous way of trading," said Simons.

"True enough. But you wait, we'll

have a school here, we'll get the people literate and then it'll be quite another matter. We can go over to money then. Finish with barter. But for the present... We've got to adapt ourselves to conditions... Wha-a-a-t! Why, you've got some Russian records here," Los cried suddenly.

"No, they're American, Mr. Los, but they're in the Russian and Ukrainian languages," Mr. Simons remarked respectfully.

For a long time Los gave himself over to enjoyment of the Ukrainian songs; they took him far away, back to his home. He rose, paced the room and stopped beside Zhukov who was looking through an American magazine printed on fine glazed paper. One large page was completely filled with a very effective picture of an automobile tyre.

"What's this wheel, Mr. Simons?" asked Los with interest. "What's written here?"

"Quite an interesting story, Mr. Los! 'Two sweethearts spent a month in an automobile travelling through the undergrowth of wild forests and along river banks with sharp stones. And after the journey the tyres were not only in good shape but even stronger than before. Buy our tyres!"

Los burst out laughing.

"Well, turn over further, Andrei," he chuckled.

The next page held a picture of ladies' stockings.

"And what's here, Mr. Simons? Another story?"

"Oh, sure, Mr. Los!"

"Such paper, such pictures," thought Los, "and all to sell ladies' stockings." "Well, that's enough. Andryusha, send somebody for Thompson."

Los was wearing a Red Army tunic of khaki cloth and a large cloth helmet with the five-pointed star in front. It made him look like some legendary Russian bogatyr.

Charles Thompson entered timidly, with a bewildered look. He had reasons to fear Los.

"Good evening," he said softly.

"Good evening, good evening, Mr. Thompson!" Mr. Simons replied in Russian and invited him to take off his outer clothes.

"Mr. Thompson," Los began, "has Mr. Simons informed you that all the trade here is now in the hands of the Nord Company?"

"Yes, sure," Thompson replied, his alarm mounting as he heard Zhukov's translation.

"But I have been informed that you are continuing to buy furs from the local hunters. Is that correct?"

Charles Thompson was silent for a moment under Los' searching gaze.

"Mr. Zhukov," he said at last, "will you please tell Mr. Los that it is quite correct that I collected forty-three white fox pelts and three silver foxskins... Tell him that they were in payment of old debts."

"Mr. Thompson," said Los sternly. "If I hear of your buying furs in the future I shall fine you heavily."

Mr. Thompson nodded and began to breathe more freely.

"And as for those forty-three white foxes and three silver foxes which you bought illegally, you will hand them over to the Revkom representative. Andryusha, write him a receipt for them."

Charles Thompson brightened visibly. He had come out of that better than he expected.

CHAPTER XI

In the morning kayurs arrived—experienced drivers who knew the country. Los asked Mr. Simons to give them tea, dressed for a journey and went outside.

A brilliant moon was rising from behind the hills, casting long shadows. The sharp peaks were etched black against the sky, looking as though they were pasted to it. A hard frost had gripped the land. Everything was silent, the hush broken only by the crunching of snow beneath the soft footwear of an occasional passer-by.

The sea was held in the grip of ice as though bound down beneath its strong, blue covering. Lonely blocks of ice reared up sharply over the level stretch like silent sentries. No sound could be heard. Nature in its sternest mood was guarding the great hushed peace of the north.

"How quiet it is!" said Los, straining his ears for the faintest sound.

Suddenly a dog howled, followed by a second, a third, and then all the dogs in the settlement took up the wailing, heartrending concert till Los felt an uncanny chill. For a moment the howl-

ing stopped, and then again somewhere far off, the thin wail began and again it was taken up from all directions.

The kayurs ran to the sledges and shouted gaily:

"Tagam! Tagam! Forward! Forward!"

The dogs took the weight of the traces and raced forward along the snowy shore. Andrei was in the first sledge with his kayur, Los in the second. Both huddled down in their furs, pulled the hoods down over their foreheads leaving only a slit for the eyes, and entrusted their lives to the kayurs.

The dogs ran silent-footed along the craggy shore, the sledges slipping easily over the snow-covered ice, flat as a billiard table. A dry wind blew. Through the fur caps muffling the men's heads they could hear a strange sound, hardly more than a vibration. . . .

"Listen, Los! The cliffs are singing!" called the kayur.

Every salient of the hanging cliffs, every smallest hollow responded to the pressure of the wind and echoed with its own voice. It was strange to listen to the thin ringing sound in various keys. The ancient crags were singing.

Along the cliffs the wind carried a gritty stone dust which rustled over the ice like metal shavings stinging the face and blinding the eyes. The way was sprinkled with fallen stones, the work of wind and water.

"Look, Los! That is a new cape!" the kayur explained eagerly. "Here a cliff fell. The roar was heard as far as Loren. The ice was broken. Many fish died. Men took them away on sledges."

Los stared in amazement at a thousand-ton crag of rare beauty. It was as though somebody had sawn off the huge mass, polished it but not yet laid it in place.

In a valley running down to the sea stood a single yarang. It seemed sad and melancholy in its loneliness.

"Why does he live here alone?" asked Los.

"He likes it," replied the kayur.

Seeing the yarang, the dogs put on a spurt thinking this the end of the journey. The kayurs smoked with the owner of the lonely yarang, talked for a little while and then set off again.

"Los!" said the kayur, "The man living in that yarang said that ahead the sea trail is dangerous. Not long ago the south wind swept away the ice and only a narrow strip remains along the cliffs. The other trail, over the mountains, is spoiled. There has been a heavy snowfall and the snow is still soft. The dogs would sink over their heads, they would have to crawl on their bellies. You want to travel quickly. Shall we go by the sea trail?"

"You know better, do what you find best."

"We take the sea trail!" the kayur shouted to his companion behind the leading team.

Los sat on the sledge wrapped in his heavy, clumsy furs like a bear. It was difficult for him to turn round.

"Yes," he thought, "the kayur's clothes are much lighter and more convenient than ours and probably warmer as well. I must certainly get clothes like his!" The kayur was wearing a light, short fur shirt, well-fitting fur trousers, with short, neat fur boots on his feet. He had complete freedom of movement and in case of danger he could jump off in an instant.

The sledge dived among the ice blocks scattered at the foot of the cliff. Los peered ahead intently, holding now onto the sledge, now onto the kayur but despite all his efforts he constantly fell off. The kayurs, however, were continually jumping from the sledge onto the ice and back again. It was difficult to reconcile this agility with their usual slow and leisurely movements. Sometimes, however, a kayur would be unable to pull the sledge round in time, it would bring up against a jutting piece of ice and stop. The dogs would look round and Los felt that their reproachful eyes were saying: "Get off the sledge!"

Los would feel ashamed of himself. He would climb down onto the ice and the kayur would raise the sledge and move it away from the block.

Now the blocks came to an end and open water appeared. Cracks split the ice from the cliffs to the sea. And the sea was menacingly close—black and stormy. The dogs jumped over the cracks, couple after couple, and the long sledge slid across them.

Over the cliff tops the wind was blowing from the south but here, down below, it whirled about as at the bottom of a cleft and blew from the north. This whirlwind reached the open sea whip-

ping it into angry waves and its surging fury made the ice heave slowly beneath the sledges.

But Los was calm. He had confidence in his kayur. After all, what else was left for him?

Soon the troublesome stretch was passed. The dogs dashed onto the broad, open trail, the kayurs halted, smoked and joked about the past dangers.

"It's damn fine here, Andryushka! Look at all this space!"

"Yes, Nikita Andreyevich, I can see you're beginning to fall in love with these parts. Even your beard's got the same colour with the frost!" said Andrei, laughing.

At midday the sky showed a faint dawn.

"Andrei, let them go on the first sledge, and you and I on the second. And while we're about it, I'll learn to drive the team," said Los.

The kayurs gladly agreed to change places—they wanted to talk about these Russians whom they were taking on such a long journey to the northern part of their land.

The trail was excellent and to Los' displeasure the dogs ran without any guidance on his part. It was quite disappointing—he did not even need to shout at them.

"Nikita Sergeyevich, have you noticed Yarak?" asked Zhukov. "That's a very interesting fellow. At first he didn't seem to trust me. 'They're all alike, the white men,' he told Aye. But then he changed. He used to work for Thompson. And Thompson's daughter is a real Chukchi girl. She wants Yarak and she can think of nobody else. When Thompson learned of it he drove Yarak out. I told Yarak about the Soviet law and one fine day he turned up along with Mary to register their marriage. She's a fine, imposing girl . . ." Andrei gestured expressively.

"Well?" asked Los interested.

"But you know, I haven't any forms for registering marriages or a seal either. I just didn't know how to arrange it all."

"Well, what happened?"

"What could happen? They went away without being registered."

Los pulled up the sledge, jumped off and shaking his frost-rimmed beard cried:

"You are a fool, Andrei! I could never have imagined your being such a fool! What the devil do you need forms for? It may be five years more before you get things like that! Here's a whole social revolution being put in your pocket for you and you keep clamouring for forms!"

"Well, why get angry? As though it can't be mended! We'll pass there on the way back, and then everything can be put right," said Andrei.

"Let them come to me, I'll show you how to fix everything up. You just need a bit of mother wit."

The leading sledge had already disappeared from view. Los called to the dogs and they began running at top speed.

"And Andryushka, what was the name of that lad in Enmakai settlement? Remember, the one you were telling me about?"

"Vaamcho."

"Yes, yes, Vaamcho, that's it. The one where Alitet lives. When we arrive we'll stop at Alitet's place and see what sort of bird he is."

"This time it's you that's making a mistake," said Andrei.

"Why?"

"Why go to Alitet? We ought to emphasize contempt for him, and respect for Vaamcho. It doesn't matter that Vaamcho's tent may be small or dirty."

"You're right, Andrei. Quits." And Los laughing with satisfaction drove his fist into Andrei's side.

The wind had swung round and was blowing from the north again. A low blizzard was sweeping along the trail. Night fell.

The leading sledge halted and the kayur came up.

"Andrei, go to your own sledge," he said. "There will be a blizzard. See, the moon has put on a shirt. I myself must drive this sledge."

Los seated himself in his place and sank into deep thought.

Soon an impassable mass of ice blocks cut off the trail and the kayurs turned the dogs into the hills.

The blizzard swept down. Millions of snowflakes danced and whirled forming a dense curtain. The storm howled and screamed and in this raging ocean of snow Los could see nothing of the leading sledge not even the dogs of his own team. "Well, Los, it looks as if

you're going to get your first baptism of snow," he thought pulling his hood down more closely.

"Oh, we must drive carefully here. Here we can be killed!" called the kayur. "There are cliffs here. Very high."

At the top of the overhanging cliffs the storm had piled up large snowdrifts but woe to him who trusted to this ledge. Sometimes it happened that men and dogs, lost in the blizzard, went hurtling down followed by a snowy avalanche that buried them.

The kayurs roped the two sledges together and moved in single file. Frequently they would stop and take counsel.

The dogs moved slowly through the dense darkness. The kayurs had turned them very slightly into the wind where they thought the trail lay. One of the kayurs went ahead, continually "sounding" with his goad fastened to the end of a line. When the line ran through his hands he shouted back: "Stop!" That meant that there was a precipice here and then the kayurs went to search for the trail, leaving the sledges standing.

Time passed, a long time, and still they did not return. The dogs had lain down, curled up and were already covered with snow.

Los looked at his watch.

"Half an hour now they've been gone."

"They'll come back!" Andrei replied confidently, although actually he had no idea whether they would or not.

"This watch Simons gave me is a good one in a blizzard. See how it shines. Like a wolf's eye. And only one dollar. A poor man's watch. Go for a year and then goodbye. Clever, these Americans!" said Los hunching against Andrei until he was pressed to the pole running along the sledge.

They felt as though they had been sitting here for an eternity waiting for the kayurs.

"They certainly are a long time," said Andrei.

"Maybe they can't find us."

"Yes, that wouldn't be surprising," and Andrei shouted: "Ehe-e-ei! Ehe-e-ei!" But the storm swept his voice away.

"Nikita Sergeyevich, let's both shout together!"

"We should fire a shot or two. There's a Winchester lying where my kayur was sitting."

Los picked up the old Winchester fastened with straps and pulled the trigger. Nothing happened.

"It must be a century old, that Winchester. You have to know its tricks... That's what comes of listening to you—regret it afterwards. Why the devil didn't I take my revolver!..."

"They don't like it, Nikita Sergeyevich, when people take revolvers with them. They consider that a rifle's for beasts, but what's the little gun for? To kill men?"

"Rubbish! Now here's the place where a revolver would have come in handy... And after all, what shall we do if they really have lost us?"

"Stop where we are till the blizzard ends."

"And if it lasts five days?"

"Makes no difference if it's ten. I've no hankering to leap down from a height of three hundred metres or more," said Andrei.

"M'no, I'm no lover of such jumps either."

"We'll wait another hour and then lie down to sleep like the dogs, under the snow."

Suddenly a shout rang through the darkness.

"A trail! There's a trail!"

The silhouettes of the kayurs loomed up as they approached the sledges.

"What devil's road can there be here?" said Los, warm with a wave of gladness.

The kayurs pulled the dogs out of the snow; they shook themselves and the sledges raced forward, somewhere down the steep slopes.

"Los!" the kayur called gaily. "This is the Whale's Throat valley. Down below is Enmakai settlement."

CHAPTER XII

Los had some difficulty in disposing his great length in Old Vaal's tent. Stretched out, he divided the space into two halves.

The young housewife Alek was confused and taken aback at the visit but did not forget that tea must be made. She stepped across Los and began hacking ice into small pieces and placing them in the kettle.

It was amazing to think that the Russian chief of whom so many stories were told along the coast should be here,

lying in the tent. Nobody would have dreamed that such a famous guest could come to Old Vaal's yarang. It was astonishing. Never before had a Tangi foot crossed the threshold. What did it mean? Was it in mockery? Or perhaps the storm had blown him here?

These thoughts were agitating not only Alek but Old Vaal himself. He was at a loss what to do, he did not know how to welcome such unusual guests. The old man fussed about. He crawled from the tent to the entry, searched there, returned with some sort of skin and examined it in the light. Excited, he beat it out with a reindeer rib and turned to Los, saying:

"Move a little, I will put this skin beneath you. It is better."

But Los lay where he was, not understanding what the old man said. He leafed through his phrase book but found nothing suitable. Then Old Vaal began explaining with gestures.

"A-a-ah! I understand, I understand!" said Los good-naturedly and turned over onto his other side. Vaal swiftly disposed the skin.

Andrei entered and with the ease of custom lay down beside Los.

Even now Vaal could not be calm. He wanted to do more and more again.

"Rest, Old Man! Sit down! We will talk!" said Los.

Andrei began to translate what Los said.

But how could one talk with nothing but a whirling confusion in his head? Who could understand why the bearded Russian chief had stopped at Vaal's tent? Alitet's tent was quite close, it was spacious as the tundra, light as a sunny day, there were good sleeping skins and an abundance of food. Did the Russians perhaps wish to harm Vaal?

With inner perturbation but an expressionless face, the old man watched the Russians and meeting Los' eyes thought: "Good eyes, like a reindeer's, not wolf's eyes."

A little calmer, the old man began cleaning out his pipe.

"Here, take some of my tobacco!" and Los held out a box of "Prince Albert".

The old man laughed softly, looked at Alek, then at the guests and reached out in some embarrassment for the tobacco. Lighting up, he cried:

"Look, Alek, what tobacco Vaal is smoking! Eh-eh-eh! . . That is the wife of my son Vaamcho," and the old man pointed at her with his pipe. "He has gone to neighbours. He will soon come."

Vaal fell silent, then turning to Andrei asked in a whisper:

"Has the Russian chief lost his way in our settlement? Alitet's yarang is close by. Quite close."

"We know," replied Andrei. "But the chief said: 'We will stop where there are good people. It is said that Old Vaal is good. We will go to him.' That is what the chief himself said."

The old man nodded approvingly. That sounded like the truth. Old Vaal knew his own worth. He moved over to Los, grasped his arm above the elbow and shook it in silent gratitude.

"Alek, our guests are from the road, from the cold. It is time to give them tea," he said, all in a fuss and bustle, and Alek, moving up the table, set out the cups.

"Alek, you have few cups. Everywhere in the yarangs the cups are few. For that reason we bring ours with us. Here they are," and Andrei placed two mugs on the table.

Vaamcho, his face reddened with frost came into the tent.

"Ah, here you are, old friend," said Andrei, holding out his hand. "How long it is since we've met! I suppose you've forgotten me?"

"No," Vaamcho replied morosely. The visitors embarrassed him no less than the old man. But recalling his first meeting with Andrei, he became a little more cheerful. "Maybe it is not in mockery that they have come to me? That time, too, he did not want to stop with Red-Nosed Charlie," flashed through Vaamcho's mind.

"Good guests, Vaamcho, good guests!" said the old man, understanding the cause of his son's worry.

"How is the hunting, Vaamcho?" Los asked suddenly, glancing into his exercise book.

Vaamcho turned quickly to Los and a smile flitted across his face—Los' Chukotsk really sounded very funny.

"This is Los, the chief," Andrei explained.

"There is hunting. There are seals," Vaamcho replied.

"How many white foxes have you caught?"

"Four. Good skins! If I take them to the new American I shall receive much goods. It is said that it is good to trade with him."

"Ask him, Andrei, why hasn't he sold his skins yet?"

Andrei put the question and Vaamcho shook his head.

"They are not mine," he explained. "They are caught in Alitet's traps. He gave them without payment. And I had to take goods from him without payment. Three skins I must give him."

The face of the bearded Russian chief darkened with anger. The old man felt uneasy.

At that moment Alitet himself entered the tent.

"Good day, Russian chief! Why is the Russian chief lying in a small tent? A small tent is bad, a large one is good. There is space for you in my yarang," said Alitet, inserting Russian words here and there in his speech.

Old Vaal listened, his heart heavy. After all, he was not a youth to be held up for mockery. And things seemed to be going that way. Now, thought the old man, the Russians would rise and leave his yarang, laughing. Vaamcho looked angrily at Alitet, thinking: "Always he must take something. Why did my father not tell the Russians at once to go to Alitet?"

"My yarang is a good one, a large one," Alitet continued. "There is Russian soup with salt. There is much young reindeer meat. Oh, such good food!"

"No, we shall remain with Vaal. We shall go nowhere from here," said Andrei.

"What do my ears hear? It would seem that the Russian chief really thinks that Vaal is a worthy man?" thought the old man happily, and looked enquiringly at his son. And Vaamcho, too, felt a weight roll from his heart.

Los was watching every one of Alitet's movements, trying to get the meaning underlying each word he said. He had already heard a great deal about Alitet, and now, looking at his shifty, cunning eyes and hearing his wheedling speech, he seethed with unconcealed irritation.

"What is he saying?" asked Los.

Andrei translated. Los rose and shaking his beard, unable to contain himself, he said brusquely:

"Tell him that the Russian chief does not want to stop with Alitet. I want to stop with honest people, and not with thieves who steal skins from other man's traps."

Andrei translated and Old Vaal gasped. "Where has the Russian chief learned this truth?" Vaamcho followed the conversation with burning curiosity. Suddenly he felt a great wish to say how Alitet had poured lamp oil over the bait on Three Hills.

"The Russian chief is an angry chief. Our people like to talk softly. The American man also talks softly," Alitet replied.

"Tomorrow I shall talk with you about trade with the contraband American schooner. Such trade is also robbery. You understand?"

Alitet's shifty eyes glanced about in alarm, he wanted to say something but Los shouted imperatively:

"Kanto!"

Alitet disappeared instantly.

"There's one word that came in useful, anyhow," said Los seriously. "And I didn't forget that word, Andrei!"

CHAPTER XIII

During their long journey the Revkom men had forgotten what it was like to sleep in beds and they were heartily sick of washing in snow. Their bodies craved water.

Los brought in a bucketful of snow and placed it on the stove. Then he dragged in a child's bathtub that he had brought from a distant trading post. While they were still on the way, Andrei had wondered about this bathtub.

"Why are you dragging that thing along?"

"That's my secret," Los replied, laughing.

Now he placed the bath beside the washstand.

"Yes, Andrei," he said, "in our conditions a bath's a difficult matter but it can be managed. It's ingenuity you need, ingenuity. You've been wondering why I dragged this bath five hundred kilometres? That, my friend, is for catching the water and we'll wash at the washstand. . . ."

The Revkom hut was already hot. Los undressed.

"And now a bit of imagination," he

said, slapping his flanks merrily, "and we can think we're in a real bathhouse."

He poured a little water into the bath, moved it over to the washstand, stepped into it and began washing his head. He soaped and rubbed for a long time, splashing and blowing like a walrus.

"Ugh! I feel a hundred pounds lighter. . . You get undressed too. I've heated water for you. A whole bucketful, you could wash a bear in it."

It was midnight but the light of the white night seeped insistently in through the small window, driving away sleep.

"We'll send for teachers and doctors," Los dreamed. "We'll have our own people here and then we can get something done. The American trade posts are all right as far as they go, but they've got no ideas outside business. We need traders who don't only exchange tobacco for furs, but work with the people, introduce some culture. We need to organize our own trade posts."

"But the Nord Company's here for three years."

Los raised himself on his pillow and asked angrily:

"But have they brought the school and hospital buildings? Eh?"

"No, but all that doesn't depend on us, you know, Nikita Sergeyevich. It's the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade that deals with the company."

"Well, and what about it? Of course I'm not thinking of sending them packing tomorrow. . . But I can raise the question, can't I? Give all the facts, report to the Provincial Revkom?"

"And what'll we do about the smugglers? Did you see the 'bond' Taki Black Beetle gave Alitet? These smugglers, they plunder the people too! All the furs sail away."

"He knew well enough, the swine, that it was his last trip here. Now, he won't turn up again. . . And as for other smugglers, we'll set up border posts along the coast, get special guards. We must send a letter about that too. . . Well, that's enough, time for sleep!" and Los turned over onto the other side.

It was quite light in the Revkom hut. The sun had barely dipped below the horizon when it again began to rise. Andrei could not sleep. He rose and went to the window. Not a soul to be seen outside.

Andrei nudged Los.

"Nikita Sergeyevich!"

"What's the matter?" asked Los, starting up.

"I think we ought to organize a centre for cultural life here. You understand, a whole structure of cultural organizations. . . ."

Raising himself on his elbow, Los stared at Andrei.

"What the devil do I want with your nocturnal fantasies?" he exclaimed in considerable irritation. "You'd think there was an enemy with a gun showing up, waking me like that. . . Can't let me sleep after my bath! First the light kept me awake and now it's you! There's another perfectly good day tomorrow! Hang something over the window and go to sleep!"

And Los pulled the sheet angrily over his head.

"I thought you were awake too," said Andrei, and hung a jacket over the window. But the light still penetrated. Andrei lay down and was soon asleep.

"And now I can't get to sleep," thought Los, looking at his slumbering neighbour. He laughed, picked up his long fur boot, swung it and slapped it down on Zhukov.

"Andrei! Andryushka! What was it you were wanting to tell me?" asked Los, laughing.

Andrei rubbed his eyes sleepily, looked at Los sitting on the edge of the bed and laughed too. He swung his legs over the side and stretched, arms high above his head, then yawned.

"I wanted to talk about a base for cultural work, Nikita Sergeyevich. Build a whole centre here, with a hospital and a boarding school and a veterinary clinic—to treat the dogs and breed good ones—and a centre for political education, and a bathhouse. Not like ours here, a washstand, but a real one, like they have on the 'mainland.' And a bakery, we must have that! The people here never tasted bread and there's nowhere to make it."

They decided to place this question before the provincial Revkom, too, with all grounds and reasons.

It was a bulky package that slipped into the letter box.

CHAPTER XIV

Every day more and more hunters arrived at the fur trading post. From morning till night Mr. Simons was busy in the shop and the fur storehouse. He was tired out with the work and sometimes he took Charles Thompson's advice and closed the store.

"Never mind, they can wait a couple of days, or even three. They always like stopping here, they're in no hurry to get home," said Mr. Thompson. Within himself he thought: "They've gone clean crazy the folks here! Where on earth have they all come from? I've never seen such a crowd in all the years I've been trading here. And where have they got so many furs? A hundred and twenty white foxes in one single day! It's fantastic!"

One morning Yarak came to Mr. Simons.

"I cannot trade with you today. My head is aching. Let Charlie interpret for you. He speaks our language well."

Mr. Thompson agreed with pleasure. But soon he was regretting that he had come to the post. Trade was booming. The hunters were in high spirits and received so many goods for their furs that their sledges were loaded to capacity.

"Look, Charlie, how the new Americano trades! He is always in a good temper and we have stopped taking our pelts away again. You never traded like this," said one merry, laughing lad.

"What's that he's saying, Thompson? asked Mr. Simons.

"He says that he has a long way to go. He wants to finish trading quickly, he's in a hurry to be off."

"All right! We'll settle with him right away," and Simons swiftly began taking off wrappings.

"There's no need for you to give him so much, Simons. You could pay him much less and he'd go away just as pleased."

"Can't risk that, Thompson, I've got to look out for Los. He's got the price list and if I don't give the hunters the full rate there'll be hell popping for my company."

Mr. Thompson had always considered that the North developed endless patience and iron nerves in a man. But the North had suddenly changed.

When trade was ended, Thompson would not stop for a cup of coffee with Simons. He went away in a very bad mood. Anger was choking him. He entered his house quietly and had his hand on the door knob of his room when he stopped and pricked up his ears; then with an abrupt movement he pulled aside the curtain, shutting off the tent where his family lived. In the tent he saw Mary and Yarak. . . .

Charles Thompson gasped for breath. He found no voice to shout or curse, but clenching his fists, hurled himself at Yarak. Yarak jumped back into the corner and Mr. Thompson, blind with fury, hurled the whole weight of his massive body onto him.

"God damn!" he hissed, waving his fist over Yarak's head.

Yarak caught his wrist, gripped it painfully and in the same moment saw Mary, frenzy in her eyes, brandishing a shining steel knife over her father's back.

"Stop that, Mary," cried Yarak. "Get out of the tent!"

Mary hesitated.

"Quick, get out of here," Yarak shouted angrily and Mary disappeared.

"You louse, you bastard, what have you come here for?" Charlie snarled.

Yarak continued gripping Charlie's wrists. Looking him straight in the eye, he said calmly:

"The Russian chief said I could come. . . Said I could marry. . . The Russian law. . . ."

"God damn your lousy hide!" Charlie Thompson roared and bit Yarak's hand. Yarak flung him aside; Charlie staggered into the opposite corner and fell prone.

Mary was standing in the entry. Yarak took her hand and they ran outside.

For a long time Charles Thompson lay there on the skins, then he wiped his face with a coloured handkerchief and made his way out of the tent. Suddenly he saw Rultyna.

"You damned hag!" he bawled furiously. "Where are the children? Where have you bundled them off, you bawd?! You've cooked up all this filth! You see what I'll do tomorrow!"

Rultyna said nothing.

Mr. Thompson went into his own room, banging the door.

"Charlie is angry. Charlie is very angry!" thought Rultyna, and went to

call the children. She went here and there among the yarangs collecting them, but nowhere did she see Mary.

After she had put the children to bed, she went to look for her daughter. But Mary was not in the settlement. Nor was Yarak. Weary from many years of suffering, from her dreary life in the house of her white husband, Rultyna wandered through the settlement for a long time seeking her daughter.

"They went along this trail. Now they have probably passed that hill," said a lad whom she met.

"Good. Let them go," she said.

Rultyna returned home, went to look at the sleeping children and then stealthily peeped into Charlie's room. He was lying on the bed, fully dressed. Rultyna entered the room and spoke to him. Charlie was asleep.

"Perhaps he does not wish to speak to me?" she thought, but after listening to his even breathing and realizing that he was really sleeping, Rultyna softly left the room. She took the harness down from the wall and went outside. In a short time she had harnessed twelve dogs, taken her place on the sledge and was driving the team towards the hill the boy had pointed out. As soon as she was out of the settlement she began to shout at the dogs and rap the sledge with the goad, urging them to ever greater speed.

Soon Rultyna came in sight of the fugitives. But Yarak and Mary suddenly turned aside and ran swiftly up the stony slope of the hill.

The old woman stood up on the sledge and supporting herself with difficulty on the centre pole called as loudly as she could.

"Yara-a-ak! It's Ru-u-ultyna!" But her weak voice was lost in the expanses of the tundra. Yarak and Mary were running so swiftly that the dogs had difficulty in overtaking them. Rultyna turned them from the trail and steered the sledge after them. She stood up shouting, calling now to Mary, now to Yarak.

Yarak knew well enough that it was bad driving a sledge on the hill slopes, among the huge masses of stones. Oh, they would manage to conceal themselves among the boulders!

Panting, they crawled into a cave.

"If he leaves the sledge and comes to look for us," said Mary, "you follow him and kill him with a stone."

The team dashed to the foot of the slope, stopped, and then the leader, barking, dashed forward clambering over the stones. But the sledge caught and stuck, and the dogs halted.

"Ma-a-ary! It's I, Ru-u-ultyna! Don't be afraid!" Yarak heard suddenly. He climbed up onto a high boulder and saw the old woman standing by the sledge.

"Mary! Come out!" he called happily.

The old woman sat down on the sledge leaning her head against the centre pole, unable to speak for weariness. Mary flung her arms round her and hugged her. Yarak busied himself with the dogs which had tangled the traces. He led them to the foot of the hills and went back to the women.

"Rultyna, where are you going?" he asked.

The old woman raised her head and said quietly:

"Here is a team for you. Go far away into the tundra, into the hills and live with my brother Gaimelkot."

"Rultyna, come with us," said Yarak, moved.

"No. I have many children left at home. I shall return, and be as silent as that stone. Sit on the sledge and go swiftly. Drive the team, do not spare the dogs."

"Rultyna, we shall go to the bearded Russian chief. Andrei told me that the bearded man will give us a paper, making us married," said Yarak.

"Good. Go to the Russian. It may be that the bearded man will understand that Mary needs a husband," and she sighed heavily.

Yarak took the goad from Rultyna's hand, shouted at the dogs, which he had trained, and feeling the hand of a real master, they dropped their tails and raced gaily forward.

"Tagam! Tagam! Forward!" Rultyna called after them; for a long time she stood watching the disappearing sledge.

CHAPTER XV

Mr. Thompson wakened unusually early. For the first time in his long life he had slept in his clothes, and for this reason Rultyna had not drawn the curtains. Frowning in the sunlight, Mr. Thompson sighed heavily, shook his head and looked disgustedly at the window, brilliant with sunshine. He glanced at the alarm clock, but it had stopped.

"What's happening in this house?" thought Charles Thompson.

He rose heavily.

"Coffee!" he shouted.

Rultyna came quietly into the room with the breakfast which was all ready, placed it on the table and withdrew in silence.

After breakfasting, Mr. Thompson paced up and down the room, went to the window and saw that his sledge was not standing in its usual place. He gasped, seized with a hideous apprehension. Throwing on a fur coat, he ran swiftly round the house. The dogs and sledge were gone. His breath thick with excitement, Thompson ran into the entry, asking in agitation:

"Where's Mary?"

The children said nothing.

Flinging open the door of the room, he saw Rultyna gathering up the breakfast dishes.

"Where are the dogs?" he shouted.

Rultyna hung her head and said nothing. She stood waiting submissively until her white husband should tell her: "Get out!"

Charles Thompson pushed her roughly, she dropped the dishes and the cups were smashed to fragments.

Breathing heavily Thompson ran to Rynteu.

"Where is Yarak?" he asked.

Rynteu silently pointed to the direction where Yarak had gone.

"Get me dogs. Quick!"

Rynteu stood there in his torbazes, the long sleeves of his fur shirt pulled down, thinking: "To give him dogs is impossible and not to give them is impossible." He said quietly:

"The dogs are running about the settlement, Charlie."

"Get dogs quick, you dunderhead!"

"Charlie, are there any dogs in our settlement that can overtake yours? E-e-eh, your dogs are very good, Charlie! Only Alitet's can equal them. It is better to wait—perhaps Alitet will come."

"What are you babbling about, you old devil? I've got to go now, at once. Harness the dogs quick! Get a move on!"

Charles Thompson shook Rynteu's sleeve roughly and the old man slowly went into the yarang. He brought out a set of traces and holding them under Charlie's nose said:

"But the traces are no good! They should be mended!"

"Use what there are!" growled Mr. Thompson.

Whistling, Rynteu went into the settlement to collect his dogs—not a very lively lot and then slowly began harnessing them, saying as he did so:

"Now, where can you catch up with these weasels? It is like a lame old man trying to catch a wild reindeer!"

In the lead Rynteu harnessed a dog with a bad foot which did not know the orders.

Charles Thompson seated himself on the sledge and drove off expecting to overtake the fugitives at the next settlement. He shouted at the dogs and hurled the goad at them but they only howled dismally, looked back at him, moved more and more slowly and at last stopped altogether.

Charles Thompson sat on the sledge depressed, downcast.

"God damn that son-of-a-bitch! No use trying to go on," he thought and turned the dogs back. He had barely given the command when they lowered their tails, pricked up their ears, and ran at top speed.

The team raced into the settlement. Mr. Thompson left it beside the first yarang and exhausted with rage went to the fur trade post.

"Ah, howdy, Thompson!" Simons greeted him cheerfully.

"Good day, Simons—though it's not such a good day for me," said Mr. Thompson wearily.

"Something wrong?"

"Just tell me this, Simons—what's happening to these savages? It's got me guessing. There's this Rynteu—for ten years he's been dependent on me, he was devoted as a dog, and now he's acting clean crazy. I had the devil's own job to make him harness me a team.

"But what's happened, Thompson?"

Charles Thompson related the whole story of his daughter's elopement. Mr. Simons sighed sympathetically and shook his head.

"Well, nothing to be done, Thompson! But all the same, in your place, I'd not be losing much sleep over it—after all, it means you can get out of this not very lovely country all the quicker. Do you want your corpse to be thrown out onto the stones for the wild beasts as you told me they do here? Don't you really want-

to spend the rest of your days in a civilized country, now when you're getting on and you've got so much money together? It's half a lifetime since you've tasted real, fresh milk. Ugh! It gives me the willies just to think of it! Is it your daughter you're worrying about? But it looks as if she's as much a savage as the rest of them. Don't get sore with me, Thompson, I'm being frank with you, and I really am sorry for you!"

"Oh, that's all right—you're a good guy, Simons. Nobody's talked to me that way, like a friend. . . Look here, Simons, what about my going along with you to Canada? After all, I'm all alone."

"Sure, I'd be real glad, Thompson! We'll do well together."

A long silence fell as the two men thought about their future life in Canada.

"But to come back to what we started with—it's your daughter you're worrying about? My dear man, she was born here and she'd probably hate America and Canada as much as I hate this cold country. She'd die of homesickness for these wild stones, the dirty yarangs, walrus meat, and these terrible raging blizzards."

"Yes, I guess you're right there, Simons. I'll take my boy Ben with me. . . But what the hell am I to do with the furs? I've got over fifteen hundred pelts. They won't let me take them to America. And I'm not particularly anxious to go to Petropavlovsk and sell them there. Los wanted to take all the furs right here but luckily he hadn't the money."

"Now see here, Thompson, let me give you a word of advice."

"What's that?" asked Thompson pricking up his ears.

"Strictly speaking it's not even advice but just a simple lesson in geography. Nome's nearer to you than the next Chukotsk camp. That's first. And secondly, the Bering Strait isn't so wide as all that!" A smile flitted across Simons' face. "I could cross it on a plank if I needed. All you have to do is to give a hunter a packet of "Kentucky" to use his canoe and you'll be in America with all you want to take. You can wait for me in Alaska, and there we'll take ship and make for Canada!"

"But the house? I wanted to sell my house and store."

"But who in the world wants that old house of yours made of packing cases? . . Besides, if you start looking for a buyer you'll raise suspicions at once. Mr. Los'll get wise and settle down here in the trade post to watch you. That's no good. Just go on living here as though you meant to stop for years. In your place I'd apply to Mr. Los for permission to stay here and spend my last years in the bosom of my family. And then, one fine day—but not too fine—you'll load a canoe and goodbye!"

CHAPTER XVI

The long northern winter ended. The snowdrifts were damp, brittle, and seemed to be settling into the ground, shrinking with every day. The bounds of day and night had almost disappeared and the long, light days slipped swiftly by.

An unexpected argument sprang up between the two Revkom members—they had lost a day. How it had come about neither of them could understand but according to Los it was April 20th, and Zhukov insisted that it was the 21st. All kinds of happenings were recalled, and outstanding points in their long journeys—but all the same the figures refused to tally. And there was nobody in the whole district who could settle the argument.

"But you're wrong all the same, Nikita Sergeyevich! You'll see, you'll be celebrating May First one day too early."

Los laughed.

"What on earth are we arguing about, Andrei? Well, if it's earlier then it'll be earlier. Mighty important that is for us! Even if we're a week out nobody's going to know or bother about it. All the more since the day comes from the East, as you say."

"Well, have it your own way, Nikita Sergeyevich, but I keep to my own date. You probably got wrong when we were in the blizzard. I keep a diary up to date."

"Well, that's fine. It's no great disaster. One day we'll celebrate by my date, and the next by yours. We'll make two holidays out of one."

Zhukov's pupils arrived in the Revkom. Now they would boldly throw off their outer furs, remaining in the gingham shirts that Los himself had cut out for them. They sat down at the table and began painstakingly pronouncing letters and short phrases. The most difficult letter for them was "D." For "day" they

would say "tay," and "dinner" would come out "tinner."

The children worked with eager enthusiasm for a long time. Then Los appeared from behind the curtain holding a box of dominoes.

"Well, kids, what about a game?"

"A game, a game, Los!" they all chorused.

Los with a ceremonious gesture was just preparing to lay down the last domino and win the game when one chubby little fellow quietly slipped his into place, and shouted gaily:

"Wait, Los! I've finished!"

The Revkom echoed with noise and laughter.

"You've lost, Los! You've lost, Los!" shouted the children, and Los frowned and looked downcast as though he were thoroughly disgusted at losing.

Knowing that there was no hope of making him play more than one game the children slipped swiftly into their outer clothes and ran off. When they were already at the door, one of them called out:

"Los! Tonight old Umkatagen will die!" and the boy drew his fingers across his outstretched neck.

"Here, stop! What's that you're saying?"

"Tonight they'll strangle Umkatagen! Everything's ready," the boy explained calmly.

Los made the lad sit down at the table and very quietly, almost in a whisper, asked him:

"How strangle him? Why?"

The boy looked about from side to side evidently wondering if he ought to talk about such things but finding nothing wrong in it he continued:

"Very sick old man... His leg is hurt. The shamans tried and tried to cure him, but no good. Ermen has no more dogs—some he sacrificed to the spirits, some he gave to the shamans... He has only two dogs left."

"Who is Ermen?"

"Umkatagen's son... He gave all his dogs but the sickness does not go. It must be a very bad spirit that has gone into Umkatagen's leg and now he is going to the 'people on high'. Tonight. All the folks are glad. And Ermen is very glad."

Los had heard of this terrible custom and was always angry whenever it was mentioned.

"So that's it! You run off to Ermen at once and tell him: Los forbids him to strangle the old man! Understand? People must not be strangled. Run along. I'll soon be there myself," and Los slipped off his shoes and began putting on his fur boots.

The boy ran off.

"Nikita Sergeyevich, what are you thinking of doing with that old man?" asked Andrei.

"How do you mean, what'll I do? I shan't let them strangle him and that's all there is to it!" Los cried angrily.

"You know... up to now they've carried out all your orders. This will be the first one they'd feel they can't carry out. I tried to stop it too, Nikita Sergeyevich, but nothing came of it. They agreed with everything I said, but as soon as I had gone they strangled the man just the same. It's very deeply rooted, this custom! Lenin wrote that custom, the remnants of superstition, is the most terrible thing! The struggle with it must be painstaking, systematic, built on a great power of conviction. It's the conditions of life here that gave birth to this terrible custom."

"That's enough! You don't need to read me lectures!" shouted Los cutting the conversation short with a gesture and began silently pacing the room. Then stopping, and looking out of the window he said softly, as though to himself:

"I don't want to have my instructions ignored."

Ermen ran into the Revkom.

"Los!" he cried excitedly. "The old man must be strangled. The old man himself asked us to strangle him. I cannot refuse his last request. Great misfortune will come."

"There will be no misfortune. Living people are not strangled. Your father Umkatagen is not your enemy," said Los.

"No, not an enemy. I would not strangle an enemy. I love Umkatagen and I want to be good to him—to fulfill his last request. No man of our people has ever taken back his word. And you, Los, want to make my father a bad man, the worst man!"

"Here's a problem for me, damn it," Los sighed quietly.

"You know, Ermen," Andrei thrust in here, "our law is a new one and it forbids strangling people. If there were not this law we would say nothing to you."

"The old man must be strangled. Very

bad if the old man is not strangled," Ermen insisted stubbornly.

Los stood by the window biting his beard, sunk in thought. Suddenly he turned round energetically, went up to Ermen, and said sternly:

"I do not permit you to strangle Umkatagen! If I learn that you have strangled the old man you will be punished for it. I shall send you away from the Chukotsk land as soon as a ship comes. And when you die in a strange land none of your people will hear your voice before death." Los' voice was thick with excitement and anger.

Ermen listened to the Russian chief in silence. When Los ended, Ermen replied:

"Los, you are the first of the Tangi whom our people call a real person. It is only one winter since you came to our land but trade is quite different. Now our people drink tea with sugar. Those who were without rifles have them, those who had no traps have them. Everywhere the people say: 'The bearded man loves our white foxes and has made them worth many goods.' The people say that you are like a good shaman, a kind shaman, who helps us to live. That is the talk that goes along the coast. But now you are saying things that my ears cannot understand. Have the bad shamans spoiled you? You have become quite different! Why do you say that I must refuse Umkatagen's last request? Umkatagen is a good old man."

Ermen too was very excited but his voice was quiet, almost a whisper. Beads of sweat stood out on his face. He spoke jerkily, pausing at times as though waiting to see if the Russian understood him.

Los went up to him and keeping himself in hand tried to speak in the same quiet voice.

"Ermen, let us sit down here on the bench close to each other."

Startled, Ermen sat down.

"Now listen to what I am going to say. Listen well. Umkatagen is not a very old man. I know him. Last winter he was still taking a canoe out whaling. A ship will come, and a Russian doctor will cure Umkatagen's leg. It is the truth that I tell you. I shall order the trading men to bring machines for the canoes that will move them without oars. They will move as fast as schooners. And I want Umkatagen's eyes to see all this new life. It is the truth that I speak! You said yourself that life has changed somewhat already. You understand what I am saying?"

"Yes, I understand," said Ermen.

"On the Mainland there is a wise man. He is called Lenin," this was Andrei putting in his word. "It is he who has shown us the way to a new life. The old law, the law of Red-Nosed Charlie, of Alitet, is cast away, destroyed. A new law has been made which helps people to live."

"And it is this new law that forbids you to kill old people," Los began again. "They must be cared for, looked after, and their lives made easier. Go home, Ermen, and tell the old man that Los does not want old Umkatagen to die. Tell him that I must talk with him...."

Ermen sighed heavily.

"I do not know!" he said.

He took up his cap and went home.

The Revkom members were silent. Los walked up and down the room occasionally glancing out of the window.

"Well, how about it, Andrei? Have I convinced him or not?"

"He'll strangle him," he heard Zhukov's voice from behind him.

"Then get your things on and we'll go to the yarang at once!" said Los turning sharply. "I shan't leave there till I get my way."

A lad was standing by the entrance to the yarang. Blocking the doorway he whispered:

"You cannot go in. Tomorrow you can come."

Los thrust him aside forcibly and stooping dived into the doorway.

"Stop!" he shouted at the top of his voice. "What are you doing?"

He tore the end of the rope from Ermen's hand, and crawling over the skins on his knees, began to remove the noose from old Umkatagen's neck.

"Tell them, Andrei—you speak better than I do—tell them the evil spirits will not blame the old man or Ermen or the others. Let them pour out their anger on me. It was I who stopped them from strangling the old man."

Andrei translated, while the people exchanged frightened glances. Even the shaman had shrunk back into a corner in alarm directing angry glances at

the Russians. Nobody dared to open his mouth. Suddenly old Umkatagen lying on the skins raised himself and asked dully:

"Why have you come here? Or who called you? Go away, man who has lost his wits."

Los smiled good-naturedly and took pipe and tobacco from his pocket.

"Wait a bit, old man! We must have a smoke first!" he said.

The old man looked at him in perplexity evidently not knowing what to reply to this bearded Russian man's foolish talk.

"Let's have a smoke, old man!" Los continued holding out the tobacco.

The old man silently turned his back on Los.

"Come on, Umkatagen, have a smoke! I will give you my pipe," and Los placed it in Umkatagen's hand.

A painful smile lighted the old man's face.

"Like a child, this Russian chief," he said holding out the pipe for tobacco. Los filled the pipe, and held out a match. They smoked silently.

"How shall it be now?" asked Umkatagen, turning to the shaman. And he began to weep softly, shaken by emotional strain and fear of Kele, the evil spirit. He smoked with tears trickling down his grieved face.

All this was so strange that the shaman himself was at a loss. At last he hissed from his far corner:

"Let the old man's name be swiftly changed, to confuse the trail, that Kele may not know him."

"What name shall I take?" Umkatagen thought aloud.

"Take a Russian name, old man," said Andrei. "Then Kele will lose all trace."

"Yes, yes, that is true! Kele will not seek a Russian," said the shaman, seizing on Andrei's suggestion.

"What is the name of that Russian who has thought of the new law of life?" asked Ermen, turning to Los.

"Lenin! Ilyich!"

"Then let the old man take that name," said Ermen.

There could be no delay in choosing a name and the old man was immediately called Ilyich.

"Well, have you taken a name?" asked the shaman. "Taken it, taken it," the old man replied quickly, gladly.

Tests began in the tent.

"Umkatagen!" called Ermen.

"Umkatagen!" came the shaman's voice.

But the old man was silent.

"Ilyich!" Ermen called again.

"Here!" the former Umkatagen replied quickly.

"Umkatagen! Ilyich! Umkatagen! Ilyich!" came the calls from all sides. Every time the name Umkatagen sounded deep silence reigned in the tent but as soon as the name Ilyich was heard the old man started and hastened to reply.

"Well, Ilyich, let's smoke!" said Los gaily.

Thus Umkatagen disappeared from the yarang. In it there now lived quite a different man—Ilyich.

CHAPTER XVII

It was early when Los wakened, but Andrei was not in his bed.

"Gone off hunting again. Never mind, let him enjoy himself," thought Los.

He was really very fond of Andrei. It is not always that friendship can be preserved between people who must live together for a long time in a small room, learning each other's good points and failings. But Los and Andrei were real friends.

Los lighted the stove, heated a tin of meat, drank tea and began to work. As he sat at his writing table he suddenly felt a strange pain in his legs. Examining them, he saw that they were somewhat swollen.

"Not scurvy?" he thought in Chukotsk.

Going to the mirror he carefully examined his gums: they too were slightly swollen.

"Nonsense!" said Los and sat down at the table again.

He had been outside very little in the past few days—he had been busy making out the year's report for the Provincial Revkom.

Evening came, and Zhukov had not yet returned from hunting.

"If only the ice hasn't broken off. He may be floating about somewhere," Los worried and went out to look at the sea.

There was a dead calm. The ice field

stretched away out of sight. The sea was safe. Noticing old Komo, Los went to join him.

Komo was sitting on a whale's vertebra smoking a long copper pipe. He was already very old. In the whole of his long life he had never known sickness but age had deprived him of the ability to go far from his yarang. Los knew him well and never passed without speaking to him.

"Well, how's life, Komo?" he asked.

"Good. All our hunters are out there," and Komo pointed out to sea with his long pipe. "Now the hunting is good. There are many seals and sometimes sea lions. Your youth is also there."

"But is it not dangerous to go so far out onto the ice?"

"No; now it is not dangerous." The old man looked at the clear sky and added: "For five days there will be no wind."

"Well, that's good, Komo. Now I'll go and work," said Los relieved.

"What work can a man do in a house?" thought Komo, but replied, nevertheless: "Go, then, go."

During the night, Los was wakened by a bang at the door. He jumped up, ran to open it, and saw a tall man followed by a woman who was looking very excited and alarmed.

"Russian chief, help us now. Quick, quick, help us," said the man.

"Where do you come from?"

"We are Yarak and Mary."

"Wait a bit, I'll dress at once," cried Los.

In a second he had put on his trousers and thrust his feet into fur slippers.

"Come in," he called.

In some embarrassment the nocturnal guests entered the room.

"A-a-ah! Yarak!" Los greeted them and led them to the bench. "Sit down. We'll have some tea at once. Do you know how to use a primus stove?"

"Yes, I know," answered Yarak.

"Then you light the primus and I'll be back in a minute."

Mary watched Los in silence.

Los ran outside. A blazing sun was rising over the ice and a pale moon cowered low on the other side of the sky as though in fear. Here these two sources of light sometimes shared the low-hung skies.

Los climbed up onto the roof of the Revkom. He saw the hunters returning over the ice and ran for a flag. Standing on the porch he waved a red towel signalling to the hunters. A man separated from the group and ran towards the signal.

The primus was roaring; Yarak placed the kettle on the flame, while Mary pressed timidly against him stealing glances at Los. They had barely sat down at the table and begun to drink tea when Andrei ran in.

"Oh, it's a wedding here! I came running, I thought something serious had happened... How are you, Yarak? How are you, Mary?"

The visitors already felt quite at ease.

"I killed four seals!" said Andrei proudly.

"Kakomei!" cried Yarak in surprise and then began talking about himself and Mary.

"I want very much to marry. And Mary wants to marry," said Yarak.

Los brought out a thick book, and asked seriously:

"So you have decided to marry? Well that's grand! People cannot live without marriage! Good. I will register you at once. How old are you, Yarak?"

"I don't know."

"Why, how's that you don't know?"

"We didn't count it. I came to Charlie when I was small, and then Mary was three years younger than I was."

"And how old is Mary?"

"Charlie said that I would be twenty-one this year," said Mary trying to hide behind Yarak.

"Then Yarak must be twenty-four now. That should be right. He looks about that."

Yarak and Mary watched intently how the Russian man wrote in the big marriage book.

"So that's done! Now I will write a paper that you can take with you."

Los took a large sheet of paper and wrote with a flourish:

CERTIFICATE

This certifies that Citizen Yarak and Citizen Mary, daughter of Charles Thompson, have been registered as married at the office of the Kamchatka Provincial Revolutionary Committee representative.

Representative of the Kamchatka Provincial Revolutionary Committee for Chukotsk Region Los
Secretary Zhukov

Los read the paper aloud, followed with the closest attention by the newly-married couple. Then Yarak rose.

"Charlie should be crossed out of that paper. Why is he there?"

Yarak watched Los take a red stone out of a box, and light it with a match. Thick drops of blood fell from the stone as though it were a wounded seal. He dropped this blood onto the certificate, spat on a seal and banged it down, pressing the paper to the table.

Their hearts contracting, Yarak and Mary watched every movement of this bearded man who had brought such a good new law.

Los handed the certificate to Yarak.

"Congratulations," he said, and shook hands with both of them. "Grand lad, Yarak! You're a revolutionary! Translate that, Andrei!"

"Try to translate the word 'revolutionary,'" the latter retorted. "It's not so easy as you think."

"Well, how are we going to work if we can't even say the word 'revolution' in Chukotsk?"

Yarak took the marriage paper, tucked it into his shirt, and went out with Mary, followed by the Revkom members.

"Where are you going now, Yarak?" asked Los.

"Into the mountains to the Chukotsk reindeer herders. Rultyna told us to live with her brother Gaimelkot. We shall come back to the coast when Charlie dies," said Yarak, winking at Mary.

Winding and twisting among the yarangs, the sledge carrying the newly-married couple disappeared.

CHAPTER XVIII

The story of Yarak's and Mary's flight spread to all the settlements along the coast. People talked about nothing else and in every yarang women rejoiced in sympathy with Mary while at the same time they feared for her. Red-Nosed Charlie would be angry. But after all, he was not a very strong trader now. Quite weak!

Everybody knew that he would not give Mary a husband and all the coast women had sighed for her hard fate. But the most surprising thing was that the bearded Russian chief was not on the side of Red-Nosed Charlie but on Mary's side. It seemed that he could understand women's matters too!

The story travelled as far as Enmakai settlement. Tygrena was particularly impressed by this amazing news but she had nobody to whom she could talk about it. Narginaut had become unfriendly to Tygrena ever since her sister Atteneut had come, and she felt very lonely. Her only joy was the coming child: "There he is, there he is!" and she would pass her hands over her large abdomen. She was going to be a real woman after all.

Taking advantage of Alitet's absence, she decided to visit old Vaal's yarang. Meeting Alek Tygrena cried joyfully:

"I can feel him living here in my belly!"

Old Vaal, Alek, and especially Vaamcho—all rejoiced in sympathy with Tygrena.

"Alek! People are saying that the bearded chief told Mary: people cannot live without marriage... He made them a marriage paper with fire and blood. He being a foreign man ... and white...."

Then the old man removed his pipe from his mouth and spoke.

"Yes, he understands. He has reindeer's eyes. Vaal knows good people at once. With a wild beast I know what it is thinking by the way it acts, and with a man I know by his eyes what he is. Many Tangi come to us, but what our hearts desire they cannot understand. The bearded man understands!"

The old man drew on his pipe, and continued:

"But nevertheless, he too has been mistaken. Once he has been mistaken. He should not have stopped at our yarang. I knew then that Alitet would take the traps back again. And where can I find traps now? A man without traps is like a sledge without dogs. I cannot catch a fox by the tail with my hands...."

"Vaal, yesterday Alitet was angry. The story had come that the new Americano is lending traps. The bearded man told him to do it."

"Who brought this story?" asked Vaamcho.

"I do not know," Tygrena answered.

"But he is already giving traps. That was why Alitet was angry and scolded."

"The Russian chief told it to me too but then I thought: perhaps it is not so. But it seems it is the truth!" cried Vaamcho joyfully.

"You must go quickly to the new Americano, Vaamcho, and find out for yourself," said Vaal. "Now you are the chief here. And you must tell the people the news."

"That is right, Vaamcho. You must go yourself. Alitet is hiding this news. He let it out at home because he was angry. He hates the bearded man very much and he is afraid of him. The bearded man spoke loudly when he came to us. He forbade Alitet to trade any more... Now Alitet has surely gone to Charlie to complain," Tygrena concluded.

"Let him complain. Red-Nosed Charlie is now weak," Vaamcho remarked.

"Probably Alitet wants to go to Gaimelkot. To take the dogs away from Yarak. It was he who gave the team to Red-Nosed Charlie. Perhaps he will take Mary as well?"

"Yarak has a marriage paper," said Vaamcho.

"The story goes that the seal on it was broken when he was asleep and the paper lay under his head. Only a small red piece is left. Yarak has bound the paper in wood and carries it under his shirt. But it must be spoilt since the seal on it is broken? And what is it for, this marriage paper?" asked Tygrena.

Old Vaal rose to answer the question.

"Why is there a herdsman with the flock? To protect the reindeer from wolves. It may be that the marriage paper like a herdsman protects the young people. Who may know all the intricacies of the new law?"

"To understand it is difficult, but all the same, it is interesting," said Tygrena.

"Tygrena, where is Aye now?" asked Vaamcho.

"They say that he has wandered far beyond the mountains. In the summer, people say, he will come to the coast. Probably he has married."

"But you, Vaamcho, you must certainly go to the new Americano. You must find out this news about the traps. Or it may be that we shall be left without traps," the old man said again.

He struck a match, lighted his pipe, and continued:

"Nowadays there is much news on the coast. Perhaps it presages something bad? I had a dream—a hare was eating a wolf. A weak hare but she ate it up."

Meanwhile there were developments in the Loren settlement.

Mr. Thompson had come to hate everybody and Rultyna in particular. Once he wanted to strike her but restrained himself for fear of still more unpleasantness. He allowed nobody into his room and prepared his food himself. He left the house only when everybody had gone to bed. He even stopped visiting Mr. Simons.

Business was booming at the trading post and Mr. Simons was up to the eyes in work, but nevertheless, he somehow managed to squeeze out the time to visit Mr. Thompson. He found his host morose and silent.

"Simons wants me to leave Mary here," thought Thompson. "He would probably prefer it if Charles Thompson took only bank credits with him to Canada, without any heirs. Oh, I've tumbled to his tricks! I know what he is after! That fox knows which side his bread's buttered!"

Very soon without any visible reason the two men ceased to meet.

The hunters stopped bringing the news to Red-Nosed Charlie and he had no idea of what was going on round about him. He did not even know where Mary and Yarak were now. His head was filled with many thoughts — never before in his life had he been forced to think so much. When he looked out of the window and saw Mr. Simons airing the furs, he was beside himself and paced the room, hands behind his back. All his habits had gone to the winds—he did not even cross off the dates on his calendar and stopped reading the newspapers and magazines. He tried to amuse himself with Jack London's books but he already knew them almost by heart.

"Those hunters who used to be ready to lick my boots have all gone off like fish at low tide," he thought. "Ungrateful savages! God damn their stinking hides! Even Alitet doesn't show up! A savage is always a savage," and he hurled his book into a corner.

Mr. Thompson now went to bed careless

of any timetable, and lay for a long time with open eyes.

"If only the summer would come. . . If only the ice would go, I'd not stop here another moment. . . But the children? They've got Norwegian blood in their veins. Mixed with that—savage. . . No, no! That boy Ben's a real European. That's my real son. And Mary. . . But Bertha? Just the name, and that's all. Ben's illiterate! Can't read at twelve! Just think of that, in a civilized country, with a rich father. . . But here he runs about among the yarangs, eats that horrible meat with the natives and enjoys it. How on earth didn't I think of that before?"

Mr. Thompson jumped off the bed and paced the room nervously. Looking out of the window he saw Alitet, standing beside his sledge surrounded by small boys. He ran outside.

"I've been expecting you for a long time!" he cried delighted.

"I have travelled the tundra. I needed to collect debts."

They entered the room.

"These are bad times, Alitet!" said Charlie, sitting down in the rocking chair.

"Oh, bad times, bad times, Charlie! My ears do not wish to hear about the Russian chief. My eyes do not wish to see him. Coming to you I wanted to avoid him. But I had to bring him pelts. Some kind of fine," and Alitet pulled out the receipt.

"What! A hundred pelts!" Mr. Thompson jumped up and cursed fluently. "But that's robbery! The scoundrel! He took forty-three pelts from me, too!"

"Yes, yes! My heart left my body when my eyes saw how the other Russian packed my furs into his sack. Why has that chief come to the coast? Without him we could do great things! He forbade me to trade with skins. If I trade, then he will take everything from me . . . even the dogs he will take."

"And how many furs have you collected now?"

"Oh, very many! They are all hidden. I shall wait for Brown again. He made a good trade with me. He even traded with paper," and Alitet pulled out the Black Beetle's bill.

Mr. Thompson wiped his glasses and began to read.

"What? Is that a bad paper?" asked Alitet in alarm watching Charlie's expression.

"Wait a bit, wait a bit. I will read it again," Charlie replied thinking hard what he should say.

"This is very good, Alitet! You have become a real trader. This paper is the same thing as goods. I trade like that, too, you know. But I forgot to tell you, Captain Brown will not be coming this summer. His schooner broke up. It will take much time to mend it."

Mr. Thompson was lying to Alitet so as to avoid sowing distrust for all white men in his mind. He himself had an idea of tricking Alitet before leaving.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said Alitet, shaking his head. "Brown himself was afraid the schooner was very light for a storm. I put into it all the seal tusks and whalebone that are written in the paper but all the same, it was evidently not sufficient."

"Probably it wasn't enough."

"And to whom shall I sell my furs now? I have very many. I shall not sell them to the new American. He goes together with the bearded Russian."

"That is right, Alitet! This summer we shall have to take them to America ourselves. We can go there easily on your whaleboat."

"Yes, my whaleboat is a good one, a strong one."

"You will take me to the American coast. I also have collected fifteen hundred skins. In the winter when the prices are high in America I shall sell your furs and mine and then come back with Captain Brown. He is my friend. We shall not bring the schooner to Enmakai but go a little further so that no eye should see us. You understand?"

"That is right. You should not let Vaamcho see. He has become a very bad man, he is friends with the Russians again."

"And for your furs, Alitet, I shall write the same kind of paper as Captain Brown did."

"That is good, Charlie! That is very good!"

"Be careful of Rynteu, Alitet. He too has been made a chief here. Ha-ha! A chief? He would not even have had a yarang if I had not helped him. The Russian chief spoils people. I am afraid Alitet that the Russian chief may stop us taking away the furs."

"We should kill him," whispered Alitet. "And burn the new American's

store. Then people will trade with you again. He must be killed. He helped to take away your girl. They are now living in Gaimelkot's camp."

Mr. Thompson lighted a cigarette and paced the room.

"Charlie, if we could entice the Russian into the mountains I would kill him there."

"Do you want me to fix it so that you can meet him in the mountains?"

"Oh, how I want it! But how will you do it?"

Mr. Thompson scattered some rubbish near the door and called Rultyna.

"What do you think you're doing, you trollop, sending Mary to Gaimelkot? And think I'm going to sweep up that mess myself? Clean it up!" he said.

Deliberately leaving the door open he turned back into the room.

Rultyna came to the door with a brush and shovel, and heard Charlie saying loudly:

"Alitet, I look on you as a friend. I have always helped you. Now you must help me. Go at once to Gaimelkot and get Mary and my dogs."

Charlie went to the door, closed it tightly, then bending over Alitet whispered:

"She heard what I said and she'll spread the news quickly. The Russian chief will probably hear of it. And then, perhaps, you will meet him in the mountains."

Alitet's eyes blazed.

"Oh, Charlie, what a big head you have! And my head knows, too, what I must do in the mountains."

CHAPTER XIX

It was a quiet morning. No cry, no squeal, no rustle broke the silence of the hushed tundra. The air swept through the valleys and the mountain ravines in currents that seemed almost tangible, flowing as smoothly as a great river on a calm day. And over the whole great tundra arched an infinite, deep blue sky without a single cloud.

A brisk, nimble fox slipped from its lair. It no longer had the snowy whiteness of winter, the spring sun had scorched it and its coat was somewhat yellow. The fox looked about alertly and then disappeared underground again.

In another moment eight cubs came tumbling out, one after the other. They were still young and silly and after spilling out of the hole crowded timidly near the entrance. The mother pushed them in all directions with her nose and then ran off about her business. With timid curiosity the young foxes looked about them. This was their first sight of the world, the first time they could warm themselves in the caressing beams of the morning sun. It was shining warmly and seemed to bathe them in its long rays. The cubs began to play. But suddenly a large-eyed Polar owl began circling above them flapping its wings heavily. In a flash the young foxes had disappeared into their underground home.

Huddled in their lair, the cubs impatiently awaited their mother's return. She would be sure to bring them something—a mouse, or a white grouse, or a piece of reindeer meat left over from a wolf's meal, or perhaps seal meat thrown away by some hunter. The vixen would drive a mouse to her inexperienced children, they would twitch their black noses, lift their paws nervously and then make a sudden dash for the mouse, tearing it with their sharp claws. That was how the young foxes learned to understand life. As soon as they gained strength, they would run about the wide tundra leaving their tracks in a finely-etched chain in the snow.

Old Vaal too emerged from his yarang as though from some dark lair and blinked at the sun rising over the sea. He pulled his belt tighter and hurried onto the tundra to seek white foxes' lairs.

The old man walked preceded by his elongated shadow. He was thinking: "Now a rifle costs only two skins and for one skin one can buy tea enough for a whole year. Now you must take care that the hunting should be good."

Old Vaal climbed a small hill, raised his arm and his long, trembling shadow reached far into the tundra stretching over the shining snow to the end of the world. He moved his arm from side to side admiring the effect. The shadow lay at such an angle that a dog team could not go around it in a whole day.

For a long time Vaal walked about the tundra noting suitable places. By evening he felt tired and seeing a granite

boulder warmed by the sun, sat down upon it and dozed.

It had been morning when the old man set out but he did not return that day. It was only on the third day that old Vaal was found dead with an ear torn off. His cheek was scratched and marks of teeth could be seen. The claws of a brown bear had left terrible traces on the old man's face. Vaal was lying huddled and contorted beneath the beast's carcase. One of the old man's arms was thrust into its mouth, almost up to the elbow, while the other held the shaggy neck in a tight grip. Evidently, the bear had attacked the old man but Vaal had vanquished the lord of the tundra at the cost of his own life.

It is not every day that men die as old Vaal had died. The sad news was the sole topic of conversation in all the yarangs. He was dead this man who knew the sea and all its ways, this sagacious counsellor; he had died in battle with the brown bear like a real hunter.

Vaamcho mourned his father deeply. After the funeral he did not leave his yarang at all. Custom forbade him to hunt for thirty days. Alek went to the river for fresh water ice, and Vaamcho alone with his sorrowful thoughts sat in the tent and smoked his pipe. His mother had frozen to death, his father had been torn by a bear. It is not good when there is space in the yarang. It is dull. If only children would come soon! In the yarang there should be noise, bustle.

Tumatuge was standing outside, surrounded by a crowd of hunters. He was excitedly telling the latest news which he had just heard from the shaman Korauge.

"Vaamcho became chairman," said Tumatuge. "Why give such names to our people? Korauge said—that is why old Vaal died. What kind of chief is Vaamcho? He has not even a full team of dogs. Seven dogs in place of twelve! The spirits did not like such a chairman chief. And therefore misfortune came."

The hunters listened to Tumatuge in trepidation. Oh, Tumatuge was always the first to learn all kinds of news! Nobody was so often in Alitet's tent as Tumatuge!

"Yes, and why must there be chiefs along the coast?" asked Tumatuge. "Never has it been known. People were born and lived without chiefs. It was the bearded Russian who thought of having them. But why? Nobody knows. Perhaps the bearded man wanted to start his own tribe of chairman-chiefs on the coast? That is what Korauge says. And Korauge knows life!"

"That must be right," thought the hunters. "Did any bear claw Vaal when Vaamcho was not a chief?"

"Korauge said," Tumatuge continued, "that the bear smelt the chairman and came close to the coast. That has never been known before. The brown bear lives in the mountains. Why should he come down here?"

Everything was clear. They were only surprised to think how correctly the shaman Korauge had worked it all out. They themselves would never have guessed it! The evil word—"chairman"—flew along the coast like a bird's feather driven by the storm.

The hunters talked for a long time about the latest news which Tumatuge had brought. The news also entered the yarang belonging to Vaamcho, the chairman of the tribal council. It was brought by an alarmed Alek. She put ice into the tub telling Vaamcho in terror that Korauge had learned the bear's plans. He would come again and tear her, Alek, if Vaamcho remained chief.

What Alek had to tell increased Vaamcho's gloom. And the chairman of the tribal council began to think the same as all the Enmakai people thought.

From a greasy box Vaamcho took the paper which Los had left him. This paper said that Comrade Vaamcho was chairman of the Enmakai tribal council. Vaamcho did not know how to "talk" with paper but the Russian chief himself had told him what was on it. At that time it had all been very interesting, it had even made him smile. But now, see what that paper had brought; his father was dead.

For a long time Vaamcho turned the paper over and over staring at it and thinking.

Alek sat down beside him. With a shrug she slipped off her fur clothing, pressed close to Vaamcho's back and taking her husband's hand in hers said softly:

"Vaamcho, the people say that you must go to Korauge. . . I know that you do not like him. But all the same, you must go. . . The people do not talk for

nothing. The future man in my belly also says that you must go to Korauge. He does not want more misfortunes to come to our yarang."

Vaamcho looked at his wife. Deep sorrow lay on his face. He laid a hand on her shoulder, stroked it, and said:

"Tell him, that future man within you, that I shall go to Korauge at once."

Vaamcho put on his fur shirt, folded the paper, tucked it inside the shirt and went out. Alek followed him beaming, satisfied.

Stooping, Vaamcho silently dived into the shaman's tent like a guilty youth. Korauge was sitting alone scratching his head with his long nails and catching insects.

Without waiting for the customary greeting, Vaamcho raised his eyes to the shaman and said:

"Korauge, now I know why my father died. Here it is, the chairman paper."

"Give it to me! I must look at it properly!" rasped Korauge peevishly.

The shaman screwed up his eyes, spread the paper out on his knee with his shaking hands, and began examining it intently in the light of the oil lamp.

"Look at it! Tries to escape my hands!" he said dully.

Korauge dug his nails into the paper and examined it for a long time holding his breath. Vaamcho did not take his eyes from him.

"Come here to me!" Korauge ordered. "Look yourself... You can see mountains on it!.. You see? And here from the edge a bear's head is peeping out."

Vaamcho looked and a great fear seized him. Down below where the seal was, there really was something that looked like a bear's head, yes, and there were the lines of the mountains.

"Cease to be chairman! And the paper must be burned on a fire, on a Tangi fire. Scrape shavings from a Tangi board, pour Tangi lamp oil over it and—burn it! Be cautious that the stinking smoke should not blow towards the yarangs. Assemble all the people of the settlement. Let them see how it writhes and hisses—helpless, without strength against the spirits. If you do not do this then he will come and tear Alek when she gathers roots. Here, take it!" And the shaman Korauge threw the paper on the floor with loathing.

Vaamcho picked it up, and crept out of the tent. At the entrance he met Tygrena. He smiled awkwardly and shrank before her eyes. Tygrena was supporting her large abdomen with her hands, and staring at Vaamcho unwinkingly. Then she gestured towards the door.

"Go!" she said. "You are a stupid man, Vaamcho!"

Vaamcho ran home and quickly told his wife about his talk with Korauge. Alek listened trembling with fear.

"Burn it quickly, Vaamcho! Quickly! I am afraid!"

"Alek, it may be that Korauge is telling lies. He is not a good shaman. He is cunning and evil."

"No, Vaamcho, he is not lying. Why do you speak such words? Here are boards from a box. Scrape off shavings quickly and I will go and tell the people to come to the fire."

Very soon everybody began to gather at the edge of the settlement. On the snow-covered mound where Vaamcho had once killed his beloved dog Chegyt he piled up the shavings. The people gathered round in a semicircle watching the shaman with bated breath. Korauge took a bottle of paraffin from his shirt and sprinkled it on the shavings.

"Bring matches!" he ordered.

Vaamcho lighted the fire which blazed up so suddenly that he had to jump back.

"Throw it on quickly!" the shaman hurried him.

Vaamcho tossed the paper onto the fire. It flared up and burned in an instant leaving no trace. The fire died down quickly.

"Sprinkle snow here so that the wind may level it and destroy all traces of this defiled spot!"

But as Vaamcho went home he was thinking:

"The same smell that was on the bait on Three Hills. That smell of the Tangi lamp oil cannot be forgotten... But what is this? All the women came to the fire only Tygrena was not there. What can that mean? Why did Tygrena look so angry when she met me in the entry? It is difficult to guess Tygrena's thoughts."

At the moment when everybody was going to the fire Tygrena had felt the first birth pangs and swiftly crept into her own tent.

A woman should give birth alone, nobody must be present. Even to look at her was not permitted. And no lamp must be lighted. For the guile of the evil spirits is unfathomable. One must be very careful to conceal the place where a human being is to be born. But the spirits are clever. Here was a strong wind rising already. The dry walrus skins covering the roof rattled.

In the dark tent Tygrena lay down on the reindeer skins she had prepared in advance. She felt racking pain but she knew that she must not scream or groan. Did she not want to become a mother? Must she not make it seem to the evil spirits that nothing in particular was happening in her tent?

She tried to dull the unendurable pains with the thought that soon a new being was to appear who would grow up and become either a real hunter or a real woman.

Joy fought with pain. Tygrena would smile then listen apprehensively to the wind. Sometimes she even held her breath for fear of exposing herself. The wind was howling, the evil spirits must be somewhere very near.

Filled with excitement and alarm she waited—when would the new being cry out? Tygrena knew that there were sometimes difficult births and then the other women would help the mother, pressing out the child with a board. But then the evil spirits quickly found out the place where a person was being born and the child died.

No, she would make no sound, not even if she were three days giving birth. Better die in silence.

Suddenly an almost irrepressible scream rose in her throat. She bit her hand till it bled to counter the pain with another. And every time she felt herself losing consciousness, Tygrena summoned up her strength and bit her hand again.

She felt very hot. She wanted to drink. Her lips were dry. But now she was unclean and could not use the common vessels and she had not had time to prepare her own.

A crowd of women had gathered near the tent. There was anxiety on their faces and each of them was listening—to catch the child's cry, to catch Tygrena's call for assistance. In such a strong wind one might fail to hear the weak voice of a woman already drained of strength. But dead silence reigned in the tent.

It was night when Tygrena at last heard the voice of a small being. This gave her strength and she did all that was necessary herself. She tied the umbilical cord with one of her hairs, bit it through, sprinkled it with birch bark ashes, and fell back on the skins weak but smiling.

The new being began to cry.

Tygrena spoke in a whisper.

"Yes, cry, scream! Don't be quiet like your father Vaamcho."

Hearing the cry of a child the women exchanged glances and their eyes sparkled. One of them went to Tygrena. She lighted the lamp, picked up the child, carried it out of the tent, swiftly rubbed it with snow and brought it back to the mother's warm body.

"Another hunter has come to our settlement," said the woman.

Alitet drove up. He was morose and went silently into his yarang without answering the people's questions. Barely had he entered when he heard loud crying. Alitet stopped, listened and asked:

"Who is that?"

"A son is born, Alitet," replied a woman.

Throwing off his fur shirt Alitet went swiftly into his wife's tent. Tygrena was dozing.

Alitet tore the child from its mother's arms and looked into its eyes. Tygrena raised herself, silently seized the child and pressed it to her breast.

"I thought that he would have light, American eyes but they are ordinary ones!" said Alitet dissappointed.

CHAPTER XX

The most monstrous rumours were creeping along the whole coast from one settlement to another. They crawled like a heavy fog that gradually shuts out the sun, from one yarang after another.

The new law of life which the bearded Russian chief had brought from afar swiftly became transformed into a spirit of sickness, misfortune, disaster. The rumours grew, and like streams flowing into one another in flood time merged into one common river.

Soon after Vaamcho had burned his paper on the fire nearly áll the chairmen of the tribal councils raced to the Revkom. They came to Los in an excited crowd.

An elderly hunter advanced, took off his cap and wiped his wet forehead with it.

"Chief! Take back this paper which you left in my yarang. It has stolen all sleep from me. Because of it my wife was very ill. I am afraid to be a chairman-chief. Take it back. Let our shaman Ayak be chief. For him it is possible. He himself can drive away the evil spirits if misfortune comes. He will be a good chief," concluded the agitated chairman of the tribal council and laid his paper on the table.

Los silently took out his pipe. Without hurrying he filled it and lighted it amid a general silence.

"Well, and why have the others come?" he asked.

"We too have brought the papers," came the reply in many voices.

"Good! Put them on the table. But know this, I shall not appoint shamans as chairmen. Tell them that."

One after the other all the chairmen laid their certificates on the table. Only one, the chairman of the Loren tribal council stood motionless looking about in perplexity.

"And you, Rynteu, why are you not putting down your paper?"

"My paper is at home, in a tea tin," the old man replied.

"Why did you not bring it with you?"

"I came on other business."

"Aha! Good!" said Los, gladly. "You'll have to wait a bit, Rynteu, till I finish talking with these people!"

"I can wait," the old man replied.

The chairmen in their dark-brown fur shirts stood huddled together. Their eyes blazed with excitement in their dark wind-burned faces. Each one looked alternately at Los and at Rynteu. Not one of them even dared to smoke.

"Comrades!" Los addressed them. "Now listen to me. I know why you have come here. You think that I myself am not sorry about the old man Vaal? I am very sorry. He was my close friend. He was a man with great understanding. A man with a real heart."

The chairmen pricked up their ears. Los pulled on his pipe, and continued:

"But I want to ask you all one thing. Before these papers appeared in your yarangs, did anybody die?"

Silence reigned.

"Well, speak!"

"People die every year on the coast," came a voice from the crowd.

"Hunters perished carried away by the ice?"

"Every year it happens."

"Bears never clawed people before?"

The hunters were silent again.

Then old Rynteu slowly parted the crowd and came up to the table.

"I will speak," he said. "I am older than all of you. I saw the sun before you did. When Charlie traded all of you waited with me in the travellers' yarang. There is no other yarang along all the coast where so much news was heard as in mine. I remember all news. Every year brown bears would tear first one herdsman, then another. Who was it that tore the herdsman Changu last summer when he was sleeping on the tundra? Was it not you, Kotkhyrgyn, who brought this news to my yarang? I heard it with these ears," the old man pulled his own ear and continued. "What are you? Are you stupid seals? Why have you begun to forget so much? That is bad! Things must be remembered!" and the old man went back to his place.

Los combed his beard and spoke.

"Comrades! It appears that people were torn by bears before these papers came to you. I think that people who are not good are lying to you. Bad people. Those people who do not want good trade. Perhaps they themselves want to trade again, the old way? Like Red-Nosed Charlie, like Alitet? What do you think?"

There was a long silence. At last Kotkhyrgyn went up to the table and picked up a paper.

"I take my paper back," he said.

"Wait a bit, wait a bit, Kotkhyrgyn! Perhaps that is not your own paper you are taking, I must look!"

"And I will take it... And I... And I..." came other voices.

Los sorted out the certificates and handed them back to his chairmen.

"Loke, where is Loke? His paper is left here."

"Loke has gone. He does not want to take it," said somebody.

Los talked to the chairmen for a long

time. Evening was near when they dispersed to their settlements.

Old Rynteu alone remained in the office.

"What was it you wanted to see me about?" asked Los.

"Bad business. Very bad. Rultyna came to me with bad news. Charlie has sent Alitet to Gaimelkot to get Mary and take the dogs from Yarak."

"We must follow Alitet," said Los.

The old man nodded approvingly.

"Nikita Sergeyevich, you can't go into the mountains without a guide," Andrei interrupted. "You'll certainly get lost!"

"I know the way. Charlie used to send me into the mountains for skins. I shall show you the trail," said Rynteu.

"That's fine. How many days' travel is it, Rynteu?"

"Now the midnight sun is here. We shall be there in four days."

"Not what you'd call near. But we've got to go. And while we're about it, we'll see how the people live there in the mountains," said Los. "Put a padlock on the Revkom door, Andrei."

CHAPTER XXI

The May sun was shining brilliantly. It was already quite warm although heavy, brittle snow still lay. Only the mountain sides stood out black—there the snow never clung even in winter but was swept away by the wind.

Los stood looking at the mountains stretching into the distance.

"What is there in these mountains?" he thought aloud. "Platinum, perhaps, or gold, or iron? Nobody knows," and turning to Andrei, he indicated the compass.

"You heard what old Rynteu said?" he asked, "He said that this instrument doesn't work in the mountains. Shows the directions wrong. I asked him where the sea lies. He laughed and said: 'Don't look at the instrument, look at the sun, then you will know where the sea lies.' "

"Yes, of course, there must be something in these hills to put the compass out. If only we had some sort of X-rays that could show us what's hidden there!"

The dogs were stretched out on the snow dozing in the sunshine. Travelling was possible only at night when the rays of the low-lying sun were cool and the light frost hardened the trail. Rynteu had gone to look for wood to boil water.

Flapping their wings heavily, turning their heads from side to side, Polar owls flew by. And when the owls appeared that meant mice, and mice meant foxes.

In the summer the reindeer herds leave the mountains for the coast district where the summer wind and air drive away the clouds of insects that torment them. In summer you cannot keep your herds together in the mountains; they will scatter. The beasts all run wild devouring mice. Even a reindeer seeing a mouse tosses its head and dashes after it, kills it with its hoofs and eats it on the spot. Hares race along the valleys in hundreds tearing off the willow bark and leaves. Mountain sheep run and leap over the stony mountain slopes. Everything is travelling, everywhere there is movement on the broad expanses. Only the mountains stand motionless as though listening to the life of the tundra.

Old Rynteu came back to the sledges carrying two handfuls of willow twigs. The idea of boiling water on such "wood" amused Los. But Rynteu without haste cut off small pieces of willow, splintered them and skillfully made a campfire. He watched how it burned maintaining only one single tongue of flame, never putting on one single superfluous twig.

"Look at the ingenuity of that!" said Los in surprise. "Watch how it's done, Andrei, it may come in handy!"

"After tea we will sleep," said Rynteu. "A fog is drifting up, soon it will be here. I cannot find the trail in the fog. For Alitet it is all the same. He drives in the fog as in the sunshine. He is used to it."

On the third day of their journey a nomad camp came in sight. The dogs put on speed and raced for the inhabited place. Drawing up by the dwellings Rynteu said:

"The nomads have gone."

Not a soul was in sight. Everything was empty and dead. There was only the neatly stowed property to show that people had been here quite recently.

"What does this mean? Deserted?" asked Los.

"No, put away. In the winter they will return and take everything."

"But where are the people now?"

"The nomads have gone. They went recently," and Rynteu carefully examined the tracks of reindeer sledges on the snow.

"Look, Nikita Sergeyevich, the old

man's reading. In a moment he'll tell us everything, like a magician."

"They left at midday," said the old man confidently.

"How do you know that?"

"The reindeer hooves have not had time to sink into the snow with the sun. These are midday tracks. In the evening the tracks are different. Alitet is here."

Rynteu took Andrei's hand and led him aside, Los following.

"Look, here are the tracks of nomad sledges and this is a coastal one, Alitet's sledge."

"But perhaps it's Yarak's sledge?"

"No," said the old man firmly. "When Yarak left he had no iron runners. These tracks are iron ones, Alitet's. See how smooth they are."

The old man went to look for Yarak's tracks and soon his shout was heard.

"Here it is! Found it!"

The track of the sledge without metal runners was less smooth, the surface very slightly concave and roughened.

"Well, I'll be damned! How simple it is!" cried Los in surprise.

"But have the nomads gone far, Rynteu?" asked Andrei.

"No, quite near. They will not go far in one day. We shall soon overtake them following the trail. Only hold the dogs well in. When they see the reindeer they will go crazy. They will have double strength. Take my goad too. I shall brake with my heels."

The excited dogs ran along the reindeer tracks. Los and Andrei raced ahead, followed by Rynteu. Suddenly the dogs checked and raised their heads, their noses twitched nervously, then without any command they tore ahead at top speed. Reindeer came into sight on the hill slopes—a huge herd. The dogs went wild.

"Pot, pot! Pot, pot!" Los shouted hoarsely directing the team to one side. He and Andrei drove a deep furrow into the snow, braking, but the sledge continued to fly ahead approaching the herd. The dogs were trembling, their tongues hanging out, eyes blazing wildly.

"Pot, pot! Pot, pot!" shouted old Rynteu.

It is a great shame if a kayur cannot control his dogs and they worry a reindeer to death. The nomads would laugh him out of existence!

Rynteu threw his leg across the sledge and sitting astride dug both heels into the snow, holding the dogs back. But his heels slipped along the surface and the old man could not halt the sledge.

A herdsman watching the approaching sledges suddenly waved his arms violently and ran to cut off the racing team. He flung himself onto the first sledge, threw one arm round Andrei's neck, tore the goad from his hand with the other, dug it deep into the snow and stopped the team.

Rynteu's sledge dashed past, the old man vainly digging his heels into the snow. He was filled with shame. He jumped off the speeding sledge, overturning it, and flung himself onto the runners. The team stopped. The dogs howled.

"Aye! Where have you come from?" asked Andrei in surprise.

"Two of Yatkhyrgin's reindeer were lost. He sent me to look for them. I have looked for them five days! I came here to look in Gaimelkot's herd. And suddenly I saw sledges coming. I looked, saw the dogs were running at the herd. I knew at once who was coming. I thought, it must be Tangi driving, they cannot stop the dogs. So I ran to help."

While talking to Andrei like an old friend, Aye was staring at the bearded Russian chief, talk of whom had penetrated to the mountain folk.

"What news, Aye, in the mountains?" asked Los.

Aye smiled sadly.

"What news can there be in the mountains! Only reindeer here. Reindeer are born, reindeer are lost. Reindeer and more reindeer. The news is on the coast. There life is gay but here we live like wolves. All we know is that we must keep moving. Oh, how I want to go back to the coast! I think I shall leave the nomads."

The reindeer herd was already up the other slope, and Aye drove with Andrei to Gaimelkot's camp, Los moving over onto old Rynteu's sledge. The dogs ran quietly.

CHAPTER XXII

Alitet's arrival in Gaimelkot's camp had turned everything upside down. He disturbed the calm, even life of the people. Nobody knew why Alitet had come to the mountains just before the

rivers flooded. At first they thought that he had come for skins but Alitet never even enquired about them. Everybody was alert. Yarak was particularly apprehensive. He ceased to leave the camp and followed everywhere on Alitet's heels.

It was Alitet's third day at the camp and still he had not said why he had come: he only ate reindeer meat without stopping as though laying up reserves of strength. When everybody lay down to sleep Yarak wandered about the camp, dozing a little as he walked. He had sent Mary to the Hares Path Valley for twigs and told her not to return until Alitet was gone.

Old Gaimelkot knew well why it was that his niece Mary and Yarak were living with him. The presence of Alitet, the uninvited guest, weighed heavily upon the old man. But he conducted himself with the dignity of a real reindeer breeder and showed no sign of curiosity. It was only at the end of the third day that Alitet told Gaimelkot the reason for his journey.

"You must ask Mary. If she herself wishes it, let her go," said Gaimelkot.

"She herself does not wish it. Charlie told me to bring her."

Gaimelkot pondered and then said seriously:

"A reindeer you can catch and take it where you will. It is a dumb beast. But Mary... I don't know... She has no horns. There is nothing to lasso."

"Both Rultyna and Charlie told me to bring her," said Alitet.

The old man said nothing for a moment but narrowed his eyes and wrinkled his nose.

"Do you think Gaimelkot is a little child?" he asked. "No, I have lived long and I know what my sister Rultyna thinks. Have you been with Tangi for so long that you no longer know whether a girl needs a husband or not? Take the stag from the herd, and try to keep back the does! Better lie down and sleep. Then later you can talk with Yarak. He is her husband."

When Alitet was asleep Gaimelkot called Yarak.

"Do not leave the camp!" he said. "If Alitet begins to talk to you about Mary, let me know. You are young, you do not know how to talk with that wolf."

"I shall kill him!" cried Yarak furiously.

"With a knife a weak man can kill a strong one. Put your knife far away. Go and sleep. Without sleep a man becomes weak."

"Gaimelkot, I shall not sleep," said Yarak.

"If Alitet wakens they will rouse you at once. I have sent women to watch him."

A dog team appeared racing over the slopes. Holding his breath Yarak watched the sledges keenly. He was afraid that this was Charlie. But suddenly he exclaimed:

"Aye is bringing the Russians!" and dashed off to meet them. The sledges halted.

"Kakomei, Los!" shouted Yarak in delight.

"How do, how do, Yarak!" Los replied, shaking hands. "I've come to visit you, you see."

"And Andrei, and Rynteu, and Aye here! Kakomei!" said Yarak, smiling. "Here's the master himself, my uncle," and Yarak pointed to Gaimelkot who was approaching.

From the distance Gaimelkot carefully examined the unusual visitors. He walked slowly, with dignity. The old man's sagacious face and penetrating eyes attracted Los' attention. Holding out his hand he said:

"Good day, Gaimelkot!"

The old man smiled with reserve and asked:

"You know Gaimelkot?"

"I have heard of him," replied Los.

"Women! Boil the fattest reindeer! Worthy guests have arrived!" shouted Gaimelkot.

All directed their steps towards the campfire over which a huge copper pot was hanging.

"Yarak, I don't see Mary! Where is she?" asked Los.

"She went down to the river valley to gather twigs for the fire. She went a long time ago," and in a whisper Yarak added: "She is afraid of Alitet. She thinks he will take her back to Charlie."

"Just let him try!"

Gaimelkot looked at Los in surprise then went up and patted him on the shoulder approvingly. That meant that Gaimelkot considered him a "real person."

The mountain camp was a temporary one. There were no yarangs, only some skin tents here and there under the open sky. That was not surprising in this clear spring weather. But in winter too, even during blizzards the people only slept in the warm dwellings. On rising they would fold their tents and the women would beat off the ice which had formed on the skins during the night. People of all ages lived in the open air whatever the weather. A man would not freeze if he were not asleep but walking.

There were a great number of baggage sledges standing about in Gaimelkot's camp. They were roughly made with thick runners and served mainly to transport the tents and other property. There were also light travelling sledges of the finest work looking like toys in comparison. A man could pick one up and carry it away under his arm without feeling the weight.

"Aye, what's that hanging on that post?"

"It's a child hanging there, an infant. Do you want to see?"

They all walked to the "pendant" child. A small individual in a fur sack was hanging vertically from a pole driven into the snow. Two black eyes peeped out of the opening—it looked for all the world like a little bird in a nest. A gentle breeze swayed him at times, the sun warmed him, and he felt fine.

"He cannot walk yet," Aye explained.

The meat was cooking in the steaming cauldron hanging over the fire. The women watched it—it must be taken out before the water boiled. The old man had told them to boil the meat properly so that it would look appetizing. The tender, rosy reindeer flesh, if properly boiled, never burdens the stomach. It is possible to eat a great deal of it—in fact, they even have eating competitions on the tundra and there are eaters who can get through a whole reindeer at a sitting. Afterwards such a man would roll on his stomach in the snow and be ready to run after the herd for three days without food.

The women fished the meat out of the cauldron with sharp pointed sticks and placed it on a large, flat platter. Its good smell tickled the appetite. Stooping over the mountain of meat Gaimelkot, like a connoisseur, shifted the pieces from one place to another, picking the best for Los and Andrei. The size of the portions startled them at first but to their own surprise they ate it all down to the last fragment.

The other guests had long finished the meat and were now carefully picking the bones.

"Good meat, Gaimelkot! That was a fine reindeer!" Los praised it.

"Every guest who comes to Gaimelkot will find a good piece of meat. Never yet has a guest left Gaimelkot hungry. Women, begin to cook another reindeer," said the old man.

Alitet wakened and heard the voices of the Russians. He smiled, satisfied, and continued lying where he was listening to the talk. At last he rose and went to the fire.

"Good day, Russian chief!" said Alitet insinuatingly. "This is a great festival for Gaimelkot! Many guests have come!" Crossing his legs Alitet sat down.

"Why have you come here?" asked Los.

"Every man has his business. Even the animals run about the tundra for their own reasons... Charlie sent me. To take the dogs from Yarak... Charlie has sold them to me."

"You bought them?" Los asked sternly.

Alitet showed some confusion but assented.

"And Mary, have you bought her too?" asked Los, suddenly rising.

Alitet smirked.

Everybody pricked up their ears. Never before had they seen Alitet so weak—as though he had been turned from a wolf into a hare.

"Charlie told me: 'Take away the dogs and bring Mary back.' The dogs are his and the daughter is his. They are stolen."

Yarak jumped up but Gaimelkot pulled his arm and made him sit down again.

"I know nothing. That was what Charlie said," Alitet continued with a grimace.

"You know all about it. But you will take nobody from here. You understand?" said Los sternly.

"Chief, I do not know your law. Charlie told me and I came. And Rultyna, Mary's mother, also asked me."

Old Rynteu had been listening silently to the conversation, polishing bones. Now he spoke:

"Rultyna did not ask you, Alitet. That I know. Gaimelkot also knows that his sister Rultyna did not ask Alitet. It is not

good when a man lies!" and he shook his head reprovingly.

"We shall leave here tomorrow," said Los. "Get ready, Alitet, you will leave with us."

"If you wish, I can go. If I cannot take Mary, let her stay here. Only seven of my dogs bit through the traces not long ago and ran to the shore. The leader ran away too. Now I do not know how I shall travel," said Alitet.

"I will give him seven of my dogs," cried Yarak. "Let him only go!"

"That's not necessary," Los objected. "He can sit on Rynteu's sledge."

"Surely, surely!" Old Rynteu agreed willingly. "We shall harness his five dogs and the sledge can be fastened behind."

"But we must hurry, Rynteu," said Alitet. "The sun is warm. The water will come, and then how shall we cross the rivers?"

"That is right, that is right, Alitet," Rynteu replied.

Andrei went to the river valley with Aye. They were both very glad to see each other, it was a long time since they had met!

Gaimelkot liked the bearded Russian, and the old man invited him to look at the herd. Snow-white reindeer skins were swiftly arranged on a sledge.

"You come, too, Yarak!" said Los.

"No, I shall stop here."

"Yarak, you don't need to be afraid of anything. While I'm living in your land nobody's going to injure you. It was because of you that I came here. Ask Rynteu, Rultyna sent him to me."

Yarak smiled in relief and said:

"Thank you, Los! My heart ceased to beat fast when I saw you."

CHAPTER XXIII

The Revkom members spent two days with Gaimelkot. Los was very surprised to find that the old man, the owner of a herd of two thousand head, was miserably poor. This poverty-stricken rich man lived an unbelievably hard life, always out of doors. The only thing reindeer breeding gave him was food. People ate meat, dressed in reindeer skins, and that was all. The beasts wandered about the tundra in something very like a wild condition seeking the moss, and the people would follow them like foxes following mice. A great number of the reindeer perished from wolves, hoof diseases, accidents on the frozen surface, of early calving during the hard spring frosts.

On the night of the third day two sledges left Gaimelkot's camp. Rynteu and Alitet were on the first. Alitet's sledge fastened on behind swung from side to side and Los had to brake continually. The team was fresh, eager to make speed. Slow travelling tires the kayur, makes him sleepy, whereas travelling swiftly is stimulating. Even the dogs feel better running at top speed.

Mist veiled the horizon drifting in from all sides. It lowered over the earth and soon a thick fog veiled the tops of the hills.

"The fog will eat the snow like fire. We must be in time. We must not be caught in the floods. We must go faster, Rynteu," said Alitet.

He was excited as though the fog were causing him uneasiness, but actually as he huddled on the sledge he was calling on the spirits to make the fog thicker.

"The fog will not disperse, Alitet. It is very quiet. There is not even a small breeze," said Rynteu, uneasily.

The mist advanced to meet them and soon blanketed the whole surroundings. The team seemed to be floating in moist, white clouds. The mighty sky arching over the tundra disappeared.

"Look, Andrei, what a blessing! It's warm! Look at the little brutes running! I could go on driving like this all my life — on and on. I'm enjoying this trip!" said Los.

In one place, crossing a small ravine, the dogs ran over wet snow and the sledge overturning slipped over the rotting ice of a mountain stream.

"A scratch team always runs badly," said Alitet. "We should go faster, Rynteu."

"Let the Tangi go ahead, Alitet. Our dogs will run better following them," replied Rynteu not suspecting Alitet's malicious plans.

"Quite right, Rynteu! Look how their dogs are pulling."

Rynteu halted the team and went to Los.

"Los, we must hurry. In two days the rivers may be covered with water. Then we shall have to stop in the tundra until the summer. You go ahead. I will shout to you to tell you the road."

"That's fine!" said Los, gladly.

Swinging the dogs round he moved ahead with Rynteu's dogs racing after him.

Alitet was alert. Staring into the fog he whispered:

"We must go left, left. The dogs like to run to the right."

"Lo-o-os! Keep to the left!" shouted Rynteu.

"Krrr! Krrr!" Los shouted and the team obediently swung left.

"We'll soon be coming back over our own tracks, Nikita Sergeyevich," laughed Andrei. "You know the circles the dogs can draw in a fog."

"That's why we have to keep to the left."

Alitet filled his pipe to calm his excitement.

"Here, Rynteu, smoke!"

The old man took a pipe out from under his shirt and held it out gladly. Alitet struck a thick American match on the sledge and both men began to smoke.

"Left, keep left," Alitet said.

"Lo-o-os! Left!"

Alitet began to feel gloomy. The cleft towards which he had directed the Russians' sledge must be very far to the left. It was high time to reach it but it did not appear. Alitet raged and cursed himself for not knowing the trail better. If the team passed the cleft then why had Alitet come at all? Why had he planned for nothing, why had he himself unfastened his seven dogs during the night? If they passed, he would have to circle, find their own tracks and start off again. He was just about to tell old Rynteu to stop the sledge when he heard a cry.

Alitet jumped out, fell flat and drove his knife into the snow. The next moment Rynteu's team had disappeared.

Alitet lay still listening intently. It was a long time before he moved, at last he rose, ran back a few steps and shouted:

"Rynteu!"

He filled his lungs and shouted again. But there was no answer. He sighed with relief, sniggered, wiped the sweat from his face with his cap and went back along the tundra through the thick fog.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Revkom members' visit to Gaimelkot's camp called forth conjecture of all kinds. Here was something to think about!

Old Gaimelkot even went away into the tundra, far from human voices that nobody should disturb his thoughts. Really—why should Tangi come into the tundra to cure reindeer! Why should Tangi have anything to do with reindeer? Sickness—that was the spirits. No man could live without sickness, and no reindeer could live without it. And had not the people living in the mountains raised big herds of reindeer without any Tangi? Had not his father, Ukvylkot, possessed a large herd? And now this herd was still living. Ho-ho! That was funny. The Tangi, said the bearded man, would begin to cure reindeer! How could they know what a reindeer was thinking? Here was he, Gaimelkot, he had spent all his life with the herd. How many times had he slept under a reindeer's belly during a blizzard! But even he did not know all the reindeers' thoughts! He only knew what places they preferred when it was time to calve, he knew when and where they should be driven away from clouds of insects, knew the places where they might split their hooves. He knew that in order to discover the right road for the herd he must consult a reindeer shoulder blade. He knew that this bone must be held over a fire, and that the big crack made by the flame would show the direction in which feed would be found instead of bare stones. How should the Tangi know all that?

Old Gaimelkot sat on a stone ledge and thought long. Deep silence reigned about him. The fog rose, thinned, and in places the blue sky shone through.

But remembering Alitet, a mocking smile flitted over the old man's face. He had greatly liked the way the bearded chief had lassoed Alitet. The old man himself had no love for Alitet, and when the Russian had sworn at him, Gaimelkot saw that the bearded chief stood for the right. That was good and just. But that talk about the reindeer had not pleased the old man.

Mary came out from beyond a hill carrying a bundle of brushwood; she went up to the old man and dropped her load.

"Rest, Mary. You are pale, probably that is because your father is white. Now you will sleep in peace. Alitet will not take you away. He is afraid of the bearded Russian."

"I watched the dog sledges from the distance. I thought Charlie himself had come

after Alitet. For three days I lived on roots and the hoards from mice lairs."

"Did you take all the hoards?"

"No, Gaimelkot, from each hoard I took only half."

"You did well. You must not take all from the mice. They will die of hunger before they find other food."

The old man rose and wanted to pick up the bundle of firewood but Mary took it silently from him and hoisting it on her back followed Gaimelkot. When they were nearly at the camp Yarak ran to meet them. He took the bundle from Mary and laughed loudly.

"Have you heard the news, Mary? Los came. Alitet obeys him like an old travelling reindeer his driver. And the marriage paper will be good even if the seal comes off completely. That doesn't matter, Mary."

Then turning aside Yarak shouted:

"Thank you, Los!"

Aye was sitting at the campfire putting on his travelling fur boots. Seeing Mary he ran to her.

"Are you going, Aye?" asked Mary.

"Yes, I must look for strayed reindeer. Yatkhyrgyn said that I must find them, alive or eaten by wolves. Two reindeer."

"Are you married, Aye?" asked Mary.

A deep flush of embarrassment stained Aye's face. It was a disgrace to be a man without a wife.

"No . . ." he replied awkwardly. "Yatkhyrgyn gave me a girl. He said: work well, Aye, and take that girl. But all the time I want to go to the coast. If I take the girl then I must stay all my life in the mountains."

"Oh, Aye!" said Mary reproachfully. "Alitet took Tygrena from you. Then he was strong but now they say he is humble. You take her now. They say that Tygrena will soon have a little one."

"What?" exclaimed Aye gladly. "That's fine! She always wanted a child."

"What do you mean to do now, Aye?" asked Yarak. "I can't get used to life in the mountains either."

"I shall go to look for reindeer. Only now my head does not want to look for reindeer. My head is thinking of other things. It is difficult to think alone."

"Aye, wait, don't go at once," said Yarak. "Over there, look, the fog is coming. How can you look for reindeer in the fog? You won't see them. We can think together."

"That's true, Yatkhyrgyn himself knows how it is with fog. Tomorrow I will go—perhaps it will be a clear day. I shall walk twice as quickly and find them sooner."

Aye took off his travelling boots, put on his indoor shoes and rose.

"Come Yarak, let's go to that hill, let's think. Andrei has again told me a great deal, as he did in the spring. What I want to say is something that would be frightful to mention before the people."

They walked in silence without breaking the hush of the tundra. Away to the side reindeer hooves scraped—like the faint sound of moving ice.

"Yarak," Aye said softly, when they were sitting on the mound. "Andrei and Los told me: 'In the summer, when the ship comes, we shall send you to study in the great Russian land. There is a big, big settlement called Leningrad. In this settlement live more people than in the whole Chukotsk land.' I am to learn something there. But what I shall learn, I did not understand. All night I thought, but I could not understand, and a fog filled my head. It is difficult to think alone."

"Go, Aye! I do not think bad will come of it. You noticed how Los talked to Alitet and how he talked to you? He had different eyes. Clearly he wishes you no evil, he wishes you well."

"But Yarak, they themselves said that in that land there are no reindeer, no walruses, no seals. How shall I live there? I shall die."

"Aye, when Charlie sent me with the American whaler there was a great deal of whale meat and walrus meat and the Americans did not eat that meat. We were shut in the ice for many days. I had no food. Then I began to eat their food from the metal tins and I did not die."

Aye's face was downcast and depressed. It was a terrible thing to go to the land of the Tangi, but what could he do? He did not want to live in the mountains and on the coast there was no life for him either.

"I will go, Yarak," he said, with a heavy sigh. "Come what may."

The fog dispersed.

They made their way back towards the camp, but before reaching it saw a man moving slowly on the far side.

"Yarak, look—isn't that Alitet?"

Yarak's heart chilled. He began rub-

bing his eyes hard.

It really was Alitet.

"Yarak, you have become quite pale. Are you afraid of him? Do not fear. Now I shall help you. If he wants to take Mary, we will kill him. He has filled my heart with such rage that I will gut him like a reindeer!" said the angry Aye excitedly.

"That's right, Aye! Charlie has stopped trading, he probably wants to go to America. He always intended to go, every year. He wants to take Mary away. And so Alitet has come hunting for her. Let's run quickly!"

In the camp people were already shouting:

"Alitet is coming! Alitet!"

Mary dashed out of a tent and seeing Alitet screamed and began running in the opposite direction. Yarak and Aye dashed from the hills to meet her. They were flushed with running and their caps attached by cords flapped on their backs.

"Don't be afraid, Mary," Aye calmed her. "We shall deal with him all right."

"Let us go to the camp and meet him," said Yarak, calmly now. "We will drive him like a wolf."

"Lasso him and let a swift reindeer drag him through the snow," Aye suggested.

They ran to Gaimelkot who was standing in the middle of the camp watching Alitet. The old man stood there, calm and silent. He was wondering—why had Alitet returned?

Aye pulled out a knife and concealed it behind his back. The old man saw it and went up to him.

"Aye, give me that knife," he said. "Have you become quite weak, so that your strength is not enough without a knife? Why spill the foul blood of that man on my soil? The moss will not grow in these parts. And you, Yarak, give me your knife."

"Gaimelkot, take mine too," said Mary.

The old man collected the knives, laid them on the snow and stood upon them.

Alitet approached.

"The Tangi are lost," he said. "And with them Rynteu. They must have fallen into a cleft."

"And why are you not lost? You went together with them!" cried Aye.

"Silence, you pup! Do you think I am talking to you, wretched creature! Man without a wife!"

Aye, raging, flung himself onto Alitet but Gaimelkot managed to seize his belt. Alitet went up to Aye but found Yarak standing between them.

Old Gaimelkot raised his hand.

"The talk is not yet finished," said Gaimelkot, turning to Yarak and Aye. "Speak, Alitet."

"There was a great fog. My eyes ceased to know the places. Both Rynteu and I forgot the trail. The Tangi must have angered the evil spirits!"

Alitet seated himself on the snow, grasped his abdomen, contorting his face as though in pain.

"And how did you leave them? You went on Rynteu's sledge?" asked Gaimelkot.

"I must have eaten too much fat meat. I very often had to leave the sledge and even now my belly aches," replied Alitet.

Aye trembled with fury. Everybody knew that the only cleft there was, Bear's Ear, lay far to the side.

"Perhaps you purposely directed them to Bear's Ear?" cried Aye.

"Be silent, or I shall give you a blow that will make you bite your tongue off," said Alitet.

"Aye is right," Gaimelkot objected. "Bear's Ear is aside from the trail. How could you have come there? That is a fatal place. Last year the wolves drove eight reindeer there in a blizzard. The reindeer were dashed to death."

"Merkichkin, Alitet!" Yarak cursed, and turning to Aye, asked: "You know that place?"

"I know it very well. I passed it not long ago."

"We'll go there at once. Perhaps we can help the people."

"It is far to go on foot," said Gaimelkot. "Take my travelling reindeer, they will run quickly."

A lad ran to harness the reindeer.

Alitet rose, went up close to the old man, and whispered:

"If they go with your reindeer, the spirits will be angry and you will lose many of your herd."

Gaimelkot started. After thinking for a moment he shouted:

"Yarak, wait a bit to harness the reindeer. Perhaps you cannot go with the reindeer."

The old man stood there thinking: "These Tangi were not bad people. But one cannot go against the evil spirits. The spirits are all-powerful. One must be cautious with them."

CHAPTER XXV

Thick fog covered the foot of the cleft where Los was lying unconscious on a pile of fallen snow. Turning on his side, he gritted his teeth, then opened his eyes. He looked round him then said aloud:

"Seems as though I'm still alive!"

He sighed deeply.

"Where are they? Where are the dogs? . . Oh, damn it," and he groaned. "There must be something wrong with my leg." Then summoning all his strength, he shouted: "Andryu-u-ushka!"

The echo rolled along the sides of the cleft.

Los raised himself to a sitting position and felt his leg.

"Broken. That's clear. A good thing it isn't bleeding."

Los tried to recall all the details of the fall.

"When we went down, I felt Andrei beside me. That means he ought to be somewhere near. He's lighter than I am. Who ought to fall faster? He was on my right. But perhaps I got turned round, and the right side's become the left?" Los thought it all out, in the manner of old Rynteu studying the nomad camp. "I must go to look for him."

Supporting himself on his elbows and overcoming the agonizing pain in his leg, Los slowly crawled over the fallen snow searching on all sides. He was soaked in sweat with the effort.

"Never mind, I can get used to a bit of pain," Los consoled himself carefully examining the shining chunks of fallen snow. After crawling several metres he rested, then inserting two fingers in his mouth he emitted a piercing whistle that made his own ears ring.

"Boy! Boy!" he called his lead dog but that shout too was lost in the lifeless void.

"Lost here, I'll go out like a snuffed candle," thought Los grimly, and for the first time felt a chill fear of death. "Nobody to help me, and I can't get out of here myself. . . ."

After resting a while he began crawling again, searching for his friend. Then he lost consciousness—from exhaustion or the unendurable pain in his leg.

When he came to, he felt for his pipe and a broken box of matches and lying on his back began to smoke. Tobacco seemed to make everything easier and Los felt his courage rising.

Suddenly a dog growled, then silence fell again. Los crawled towards the sound. There was the sledge. It gave him a fresh access of strength and he dragged himself to it.

A metre from the sledge, Los stopped and raised his head, supporting himself on his hands. A man was lying on it huddled against the centre pole. Los felt cold drops running down his spine. The snow beside the sledge was stained with blood. One dog was sitting in the traces. It had stopped barking and was greedily eating the bloodstained snow.

The body of old Rynteu was lying on the sledge with a crushed skull.

Los crawled away from the sledge towards the dog and saw the end of the straps chewed through. Evidently all the team had run away except for this one beast, the last one.

Los unfastened the animal, tied it to his belt, and swiftly crawled to the side, telling the dog:

"See, this is my trail. We must crawl farther on."

The thought that he might find Andrei's body chilled Los. His courage was ebbing. He stopped, turned over on his back and embraced the dog as though afraid to be parted from it. Then he looked into its eyes, thinking: "No, I'm not going to let you feed on my flesh. Before I say goodbye to my own life, I'll finish you off."

It was as though the animal sensed his decision. Its hair rose and it growled. Los started. In the same instant a faint sound had struck his alert ears as if somebody nearby had yawned.

The dog barked and began to struggle forward. Los threw off his cap and listened intently. Dead silence. The dog tugged silently. Los unfastened it from his belt and took the strap in his hand.

"Well, let's go," he said.

While still far away, he saw a head emerging from the snow. The body was buried to the shoulders. Los approached quickly and saw that it was Zhukov. Leaving the dog, he crawled to Andrei,

laid a heavy hand on his head and lost consciousness again.

"Sergeich! I seem to have been asleep," said Andrei, opening his eyes. He pulled out one arm and touched Los' face and beard.

"Sergeich! Why don't you say something?"

Without waiting for an answer, Andrei tried to rise. His revolver was pressed painfully against his chest. With his one free hand he started to fling the snow aside and soon was able to pull the revolver out through the wide opening of his fur shirt. A shot sent a mighty echo rolling through the cleft and when it died away Andrei fired again.

"Andryusha . . . Somebody's firing?"

"Sergeich, you're alive?"

"Well, what do you think?" Los replied, happy to hear Andrei's voice.

"I seem to have been asleep. My head's ringing a bit and I can't get out of the snow."

Los pulled himself closer to Andrei and began silently digging out the snow.

"Why are you crawling, Sergeich?"

"Something wrong with my leg."

Andrei pulled himself out of the snow, rose, swayed, and began to beat out his clothes.

"I'm all right. My side's hurting a bit. Which leg is it, Sergeich?"

"The left. A fracture. I should put it in a splint, but where the devil will you find one here? The old man's body is over there. He was killed. Evidently couldn't get off the sledge in time. We could break off a board from the sledge for a splint."

"And where is Alitet?"

"Somewhere round about."

"I'll go to the sledge for boards."

"Wait a bit, Andrei, don't go. The fog's thinning. Don't go yet, or we'll lose each other again. Sit down. Let's have a smoke."

"Better something to build us up. I've got some chocolate," and Andrei pulled a thick pound slab from beneath his shirt.

CHAPTER XXVI

A letter had come to Mr. Thompson from the Revkom instructing him to take all the furs remaining in his store to the principal town in Kamchatka for sale at fixed prices. Naturally this was far from being to his taste. The fifteen hundred pelts, in Mr. Thompson's opinion, were his absolute property. The letter from the Revkom infuriated him.

He had long ago arranged that Alitet should take him across to America. And now he was impatiently awaiting him. Rultyna noted her husband's uneasiness and began to suspect that Charlie was planning something bad.

The canoe hunters had long gone after walruses and still Alitet did not come. Mr. Thompson was now on such bad terms with Mr. Simons that there could be no question of consulting him.

He was deeply concerned about his family with whom he had lived for over twenty years. He did not know what to do about them. Of course, there could be no question of taking old Rultyna with her tattooed face to America.

But Mr. Thompson would have liked to take Mary and the lad Ben with him. Rumour had it that Mary had returned from the tundra and was living with Yarak in the same settlement as the Russians. But it would be difficult to get Mary. And Ben could be taken only suddenly, by surprise, otherwise Rultyna would howl like a wolf. Mr. Thompson laid his plans.

Meeting Rultyna near the storehouse, he began talking to her kindly—which made her still more uneasy.

"Rultyna, the schooners have stopped coming to me. The Russians have forbidden me to trade but food I must have. I shall have to go to America myself. A man can't live without food."

"You know best what you must do," said Rultyna submissively.

Mr. Thompson went into the storehouse, looked at the furs packed in their canvas bags, and at the old iron-bound trunk where he kept all his bank securities and dollars. He sat down upon it and lighted a pipe thinking: "All my life is in this trunk. I have got together a very decent capital. Now I only have to get away and save the last furs from the Russians!"

For a long time Mr. Thompson sat in the storehouse thinking over his past life. Suddenly he heard a boy's shout:

"Alitet! Alitet!"

Mr. Thompson ran outside and saw a whaleboat on the horizon. He hurried to his room and sank into the rocking chair.

"Rultyna, send the children to me!" he shouted.

Rultyna was frightened. She sent them in and herself stood outside the

door listening intently to all that was said.

The little room was filled with children in fur clothing crowding shyly round their father sitting in the rocking chair.

"Come closer, children, closer. Come here, Ben."

He embraced them and continued:

"I'm going to America for a short time. Tell me, each of you, what you want for a present. Say what you want and I'll bring it."

"Bring chewing gum, Charlie," said dark, daring, squinting Bertha.

"Good, good, I'll bring you a whole box of it. Well, and what shall I bring the others? You, Ben, what do you want?"

Ben said nothing.

"Don't you want anything, Ben?"

"Bring me a small rifle. A light one. I shall watch for seals on the shore. They say that when you kill a seal yourself the meat is especially good."

Mr. Thompson sighed heavily and whispered:

"All right, all right, Ben! I shall certainly bring you a rifle."

Rultyna stood by the door listening to the father's conversation with his children. Charlie talked kindly to all of them. This was something that had never happened before.

A mist came down, the midnight sun was hidden. The whaleboat approached the shore and the children ran down to meet it. Mr. Thompson, too, hastened in the same direction and greeted Alitet cordially.

"I've been waiting for you a long time, Alitet. Everything's ready. Tell the men to bring the sacks of furs and the trunk down to the boat. They're in the storehouse."

Mr. Thompson looked at the trade post, thought for a moment and then went to Mr. Simons. How long it was since he had visited him!

He entered Simons' room quietly.

"Please forgive me, Mr. Simons. Perhaps I've offended you in some way," he began in embarrassment.

"Why, no, Thompson! Not at all."

"Look here, Simons! I've decided to take your advice—what you told me once. I'm leaving. Think well of the old man. I'm leaving here for good."

"That's grand, Thompson! You've got my best wishes. When are you going?"

"Now, this minute, at once. Goodbye, Simons."

"Wait a bit, wait a bit. I'll come down and see you off."

"Thanks, no, I'd rather you didn't, really."

Mr. Thompson walked swiftly to the shore. He counted his baggage, already in the whaleboat, glanced at the iron-bound trunk, and then standing among a crowd of children by the bows asked in agitation:

"But where's Ben? Where is he?"

"You forgot your gloves. He's gone to get them," Rultyna answered.

The oarsmen had taken their places, Alitet was standing in the stern by the rudder; only Mr. Thompson still remained on shore waiting impatiently.

Ben came running up and handed the gloves to his father. Charlie put them on, swung a leg over the side, but then brought it back again. He looked at Ben and asked suddenly:

"Ben, would you like to come and see America?"

The boy's eyes blazed. Without waiting for a reply, Mr. Thompson seized him and lifted him into the whaleboat, pushed it off, and jumped in himself.

"Charlie, Ben isn't wearing his travelling boots!" Rultyna called.

But the whaleboat had already left the shore. Ben, standing in the boat, waved to her and called back:

"Rultyna, my boots are still good! I shall bring you some real fine needles!"

"Tumatuge, hoist the sail!" shouted Alitet.

The whaleboat swiftly disappeared into the fog.

Rultyna stood there on the shore, paralyzed by fear for her son. "He has taken Ben. He has probably taken him for ever. My eyes will never see him again."And Rultyna called at the top of her voice:

"Ben! Ben!"

She sank onto a boulder and for a long, long time gazed at the mist-shrouded sea. She recalled all her past life. She felt herself unfortunate. Charlie had not been a real person. She had never been able to talk to him as all women talked to their husbands. But now she would go home and talk to the children loudly, not in a whisper as she always did. Her throat was tired of whispering. She stared into the misty distance. She wanted to see

the whaleboat just once more. Ben was in it! Tears filled her eyes.

For a long time she did not leave the shore, hoping that the fog might disperse. She was quite alone. Somewhere in the distance a rifle shot sounded. Soon the people would bring fresh, fragrant meat. There would be a walrus feast.

Bertha ran up to Rultyna and in a whisper urged her to come home.

"Bertha, you must talk loudly," said her mother.

CHAPTER XXVII

The whaleboat steered 35° northeast, the course given by Mr. Thompson. Alitet stared at the compass, holding the rudder. Floating ice occasionally slipped past.

Mr. Thompson was sitting on the iron-bound trunk. With one hand he held Ben to him, as though fearing that he might tear free and run away. Silently he stared towards the shore where he had spent half a lifetime but the coast was shrouded in fog. All in all, he felt a distinct reluctance to leave these parts.

Mr. Thompson moved over to Alitet sitting in the stern.

"Now the Russians will not travel about for a long time," said Alitet whispering right into Charlie's ear. "I made a small mistake. Passed the stones and they fell on the soft snow."

"You're a fine fellow, Alitet!" Mr. Thompson praised him, and looking at the load he asked:

"Have you many skins in your sacks?"

"A hundred in each, and there are eight of them. There are more hidden among the stones, I had no time to go for them, I hurried to you."

"Alitet, I shall not return here for the winter trade. The Russians will interfere with me on the shore. After all, they are still alive. I shall bring goods on the schooner in the summer."

"That is very good!" said Alitet, pleased. "Only do not come to Enmakai settlement. Go to the Bird's Nose valley. Nobody lives there and nobody will see you. In the summer I shall wait for you there."

The whaleboat moved smoothly winding in and out of the floating ice. Morning had come and here and there the sun's rays penetrated the mist. Alitet was eager to see the coast. A compass is good, but all the same, it does no harm to look at the mountains.

"Stop, stop!" Alitet halted the rowers in a loud whisper. "Look, look, Charlie—a walrus lying on the ice floe!"

Mr. Thompson brought up his binoculars, then turned to Alitet.

"It's a big one!" he said. "Tremendous tusks! I want that head and tusks as a souvenir. We must kill it."

"It's a hunting walrus. When it was small and lay on its mother's back she must have been killed and it was left alone. These walruses drive the seals away from the shore. We'll kill him."

The whaleboat floated quietly to the sleeping walrus. The hunters' eyes blazed. Tumatuge shipped his oar, took up his rifle and crawled out onto the bows. Alitet prepared a harpoon and bladder.

Holding their breaths, everybody watched the walrus. Ben's eyes were sparkling. He was to see a walrus hunt for the first time in his life. But Ben knew already that one does not kill a walrus at once—it will slip off the ice and drown. First one must wound it, harpoon it, and then shoot it through the head. Although Ben had never seen a walrus hunt he knew all about it. Now Tumatuge would shoot it in the flippers or neck. The lad was burning with curiosity.

The oars propelled the whaleboat silently through the water.

A shot rang out. The walrus raised its huge tusks, shook its head, but the next instant it had slipped into the water before Alitet had time to cast a harpoon.

An intent watch was kept in all directions for ripples to show where the walrus would rise. But a long time passed and he did not appear.

Suddenly there was a terrible blow on the bottom of the whaleboat. Three planks hurtled overboard and tusks appeared for a second in the hole. Water gushed in. The men shouted and began hastily stuffing their shirts into the hole. At this moment the head of the walrus rose beside the boat. Blood was spurting in a fountain, and it snarled. Then it hooked its tusks onto the side of the boat as though it were an ice floe. Tumatuge fired point-blank and in the same instant the boat overturned.

Mr. Thompson snorting like a grampus swam to the nearest ice floe. He reached it quickly and clambered up breaking his nails. He stood there, pale, without his spectacles, with water dripping from him.

"Charlie!" came a shout.

Thompson stared in the direction from which the voice had come.

Alitet's head was projecting above the water. He was holding the bladder, and looked as though he were standing in water to his neck.

"Alitet! Swim to the ice floe! Use your hands like oars!" shouted Charlie.

Alitet began obediently working with his hands and soon approached another, nearer ice floe. He clambered onto the ice and began swiftly undressing.

"Charlie! Take off your clothes, shake out the water! If you don't it will be bad," shouted Alitet.

Mr. Thompson was not very eager to undress but he had not lost his common sense and he removed everything. The air was warm.

"Take off the cloth shirt, it will dry slowly!" Alitet shouted again; he himself was naked, standing only in his boots, shaking his fur clothing energetically.

"My God! The trunk's gone down, and Ben's lost!" cried Mr. Thompson; he glanced at Alitet and felt that the one thing he wanted in the world was to be on the same ice floe with him.

But the floes slowly drifted in different directions. Alitet stretched out his shirt on his arms hoping to use it as a sail but there was no wind. The floes were moving with the current. Not far from the ice a barrel of fresh water was floating. It moved faster than the floes. Alitet saw it and shouted:

"Charlie, look—a barrel of water! Catch it!"

The barrel came quite close but there was nothing with which he could hook it in and Mr. Thompson felt he had not the strength to lower himself into the icy water again and swim two metres.

Thompson saw some canvas sacks floating near, but he turned away from them: he would have given all these furs for a mug of fresh water.

The weak rays of the sun penetrated with difficulty through the damp mist, and by midday Mr. Thompson had lost sight of Alitet.

His moist clothes made him shiver and he began walking about the ice floe to warm himself. By evening he felt feverish. Thirst tormented him. He broke off a lump of ice and put it into his mouth but spat it out again at once—the loathsome sweetish-salty taste made him feel sick. He lay down weakly against a hummock, pressing a piece of ice to his forehead.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Los was unable to leave the Revkom. He moved on crutches from bed to table, from table to bed. It was trying to be imprisoned in the house but there was nothing to be done.

Ever since he had returned to the coast with Yarak and Aye after the fall down the cleft, Mary had been working in the Revkom. She would come in the morning and leave late at night. There was not much to do and most of the time she spent studying Russian and learning to read and write.

Tied to the house, Los undertook the job of teacher with pleasure. Usually he would lie on the bed, and Mary, sitting on the reindeer skins covering the floor, would lay her paper on a stool and assiduously trace the pothooks and letters which would make the speech of people. She felt that she was embroidering the paper like a reindeer skin.

"Very good, Mary!" Los praised her. "If you go on this way, you'll soon get the hang of it. But maybe you're tired of study, Mary?"

"No, no! It's very interesting!" she answered with animation.

"Mary! Didn't your father ever try to teach you to read and write?"

"No. He said only white people need that. But I'm only half white."

This seemed very strange to Los. After a moment's silence, he continued:

"Yes, but you're his daughter, aren't you?"

Mary was silent.

"Probably, this summer Charlie will go back to America for good."

"Let him," Mary replied indifferently.

"Wouldn't you like to go with him?"

"No. I shall never go anywhere away from Yarak. Probably we shall have a little child. We shall live here. Let Charlie go."

She rose, and walked to the stove in her soft, embroidered boots. Long black braids swayed on her back. She was wearing a well-fitting gingham frock.

Los pondered, stroking his beard.

"When the ship comes, everybody'll shy away from me," he thought. "Mary, give me a mirror, please," he said aloud.

Los examined himself and then asked for scissors. He resolutely clipped off his

beard and tossed it onto the floor.

Mary stood in amazement, her mouth open.

"Los, you have become a boy. And you are not at all terrible now. The people will cease to fear you," and she laughed loudly.

"But Mary, I don't want the people to be afraid of me. Here, my gums and legs are swelling—that's not good. Too little movement. I'm afraid I may get scurvy."

"Los, I heard the people talking about your legs. They were talking in the morning. If they swell, you must eat raw seal meat," said Mary.

Old Ilyich, the former Umkatagen, entered the room.

"Where is Los?" he asked Mary.

"There he is, sitting there," she said.

The old man looked at Los then turned back to Mary and said reprovingly:

"I am not so young that you should jest with me. I have come on important business. If your youth makes you want to jest, Mary, look for somebody else, somebody younger."

"Ilyich, it is the truth I tell you, I am not jesting," said Mary in confusion.

Los put on a serious expression.

"Mary is telling the truth, Ilyich," he said. "I am Los. You did not know me because I have shaved off my beard."

The old man looked at him carefully.

"Yes, it seems that you really are Los," he said.

The old man was pleased that Los had changed his appearance. He decided that he was a man with a head and had acted very wisely to mislead the evil spirits in his sickness. Now the most cunning spirit could easily confuse him with another man.

The old man laid a piece of seal meat on the stool.

"I heard that your legs are swollen," he said. "You must eat this meat. When I come back from hunting I will bring you some fresh meat. The people have now gathered, they are talking about walrus hunting. Andrei is there with them. I have taken Yarak and Aye in my boat. Very strong fellows! The hunting will be good. Here, take this meat for the present."

Los rose standing on one leg and then the strangest thing happened—he could feel tears in his eyes.

"Thank you, Ilyich!" he said:

"Well, I will go. I must hurry. They are waiting for me." And the old man went.

Los went to the bed and lay down.

CHAPTER XXIX

On the shore all was life and movement. Harpoons, bladders, rifles and barrels of fresh water were being dragged to the canoes. The air rang with shouts. Everybody was in a hurry to set off on the hunt.

Yarak and Aye, who had been so homesick for life on the coast, eagerly took the oars. This was real life! Not like running after reindeer in the mountains.

"But where's Andrei?" asked the old man.

"There he is, coming with the primus stove," said Ermen.

The hunters liked to have Zhukov with them. He helped them carry heavy weights and pull the canoe up on shore, but the main thing they liked about him was his stories. Despite his youth Andrei could tell stories better than the oldest man. He knew so many interesting tales. They were particularly pleased when he talked about the Russian doctors, who would carve the belly of a living man, feel about in it as though it were a walrus, "cut out" the sicknesses there, and then sew it up with a needle, and the man would walk about again as though nothing had ever happened.

Of course, one did not believe such things, but all the same, it was interesting.

Andrei jumped onto the canoe and it put off at once. Soon the oarsmen had thrown off their clothing and half naked rowed with a will. The oars squeaked in the rowlocks and the old man sitting at the rudder, would shout now and then:

"Aga-ga! Aga-ga!"

Then the canoe would slip still faster over the smooth water. The other boats had long been left behind.

Ilyich peered forward, keen-eyed. The hunters had confidence in his steering—they knew that the old man would not make them work for nothing, he would most certainly take them to walruses. Ilyich was an experienced hunter.

The canoe entered the broken ice. Ilyich told them to stop, get out onto the ice and look about them. Away to the side they saw something yellow on an ice floe. They told the old man, and the canoe immediately steered in that direction.

Ilyich climbed out onto the floe, examined it carefully, then said:

"Walruses have been lying here. They lay here yesterday. Two walruses—a male and a female."

At midday the canoe came upon the walruses—two of them, dozing peacefully on the ice.

There was a shot, a harpoon flew out, and the bladder, dragged under by the wounded beast disappeared into the water. Soon the walrus rose again, staining the water red. It was wounded in the neck, near the air sack.

The hunters dragged the beast onto an ice floe and began sharpening their knives on their whetstones, their faces glowing.

The walrus was divided before the kettle had time to boil. The hunters stowed the meat into the canoe, washed their hands and settled down to drink tea, pleased with the good beginning of the hunt.

"Drink quickly!" the old man hurried them. "We must seek the second walrus, the male, it will not be far away."

Again the rowlocks creaked.

"Yarak, ship your oar and look about you. Your eyes are younger," the old man ordered.

The canoe, winding among the ice floes, went further and further out to sea.

Suddenly Yarak whispered softly:

"A walrus, a walrus!"

Aye and Ermen seized their rifles and moved over to the bows. Andrei examined the prey through his binoculars. Just as the hunters were preparing to fire, Andrei suddenly shouted:

"Stop! That's a man!"

The hunters lowered their rifles, the rowers their oars.

Mr. Thompson was lying on the ice. His face burned, he was breathing with difficulty. Opening his eyes, he tried to raise himself but had no strength.

"Drink!" he whispered.

Andrei picked up his hand and felt his pulse.

"All drowned," said Mr. Thompson.

"Yarak, his clothes must be changed. See, his back is quite wet," said Andrei.

They put dry clothing on Charles Thompson and laid him in the canoe. He was delirious.

The boat slipped swiftly through the water. Charles Thompson lay on a pile of walrus meat, covered with skins.

Andrei put his hand on his forehead, then laid his ear to his heart and listened.

"Dead . . ." he said. "Make for the coast."

The hunters did not move. Old Ilyich, too, was silent. A dead body should not be carried in a canoe. It must be lowered into the sea.

"Ilyich! Charlie was a white man. He must be taken ashore. Nothing bad will come of it. Let's go!" Andrei insisted.

The news of Charlie's death spread swiftly through the settlement. People came crowding round. Mary looked silently at the body of the man who had been her father. For some reason she remembered how Charlie had dragged Yarak by the leg, cursing. And now he was lying there quite pale, without the pieces of glass on his face. Suddenly Mary felt a chill of fear. She moved aside and going up to Ilyich, she said:

"He must be buried quickly."

"He cannot go to our cemetery. He must be taken to Loren where he always lived," said the old man.

When Mr. Thompson's body came back to the place where he had lived for over twenty years, Rultyna came running down to the shore. She looked at Charlie in horror, then going to Mary and Yarak, she asked softly:

"Mary, where is Ben?"

"I do not know."

"Yarak, where is Ben?"

"He was drowned. All were drowned."

Rultyna sank down on a boulder. Her legs could no longer support her. Simons came up and looked at Mr. Thompson. Charlie was lying there in Chukotsk clothing.

"And you could have left in our ship, Thompson!" thought Simons. "So this is what that last batch of furs has cost you!"

Rultyna rose, and went to Mary.

"A new shirt must be sewn for him," she said, "and he must be taken to the stones, to the cemetery."

"Rultyna, let Sime bury him in their own way, the American way. He should not be taken to our cemetery. Charlie was not a real person," Mary replied sadly.

Translated by Eve Manning

(End of Part I)

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POETRY—THE UPBRINGING OF THE YOUTH—CULTURE

Pavel Antokolsky, prominent Soviet poet and Stalin Prize winner, was one of the most active participants in the recent Moscow conference of young Soviet writers. In his speeches at the conference and at the seminaries for young poets which he ran, he has made constant reference to the tasks confronting our new Socialist culture and to the training of young people in the arts and letters. The article printed below is a report (edited by the author himself) of his speeches at the conference.

At the beginning of this century European poetry took a line of development that involved its liberation from the demands of logic and meaning. The Surrealists and the Dada school declared war on any sort of semantic burden. Paul Verlaine, father of the decadents, a fiery French fin-de-siècle poet, made a declaration of his principles in his *Art of Poesy*:

"Music first and foremost of all! . . .
Shun the Point, lest death with it come,
Unholy laughter and cruel wit
(For the eyes of the angels weep at it)
And all the garbage of scullery-scum.
Take Eloquence and wring
the neck of him!
Music always and music still!
And all the rest is literature." [1]

Against what is Verlaine's fury directed? From what terrible commitments, unseemly in poetry, does he want to liberate himself? All this was said by a man surfeited by the eloquence of his predecessors, by the spirit of enlightenment that had dominated in French poetry since the days of the 18th century, that same spirit which had made French poetry active, revolutionary and of significance in the lives of the people. And this is just why Verlaine places an equals sign between poetry and music. This is why he drives eloquence and logic out like devils and with them anything else that has a more or less important content; he places it all in the category of "literature", scribbling, craft. According to Verlaine this is all within the sphere of prose and has nothing in common with that language of the gods which is poetry. The Divine language, that is, our old acquaintance, *Sancta simplicitas*—God forgive me for mentioning it! The angels' eyes are to be liberated, to be cleansed, until they are not only cloudless but also thoughtless—fewer of the voices and smells of the earth—such was the program of the French poet.

Sermons of this type met with considerable success. As I have already said a big section of European poetry developed in the direction indicated by Verlaine: it also found a response amongst the Russian poets. When Balmont, the first Russian Symbolist wrote— "I know of no truth useful to the others. I put only the transient into my verses"—he was really singing the same tune. That was another declaration by a singing bird.

Russian symbolism, of course, was quite an intricate phenomenon: its tendencies were varied and contradictory—even Blok and Bryusov (who later came over to the Revolution) once belonged to the symbolist school: And among those tendencies there was that of "obscurantism." A later declaration in favour of senselessness, of subconsciously composed verses (the magical influence of the word itself as a sound or symbol of associations addressed to the senses and not governed by reason), came from this same source. The acrobatics of the "nitshevoks" in poetry (the "nothingists"), that made such a noise in their time may have been forgotten like the fashions of other days or like last year's snow, but the mere fact that they ever existed is symptomatic. It was an extreme echo, a caricature of the appeal for nonsense, for a simpleton as the high priest of the Muses. Foolishness, as a principle, was openly banging the circus barker's drum.

It has been said that formal intricacy obscures an idea. If this were only true! Actually it is much worse and far simpler. The interesting thing is that these different intricate forms are brought into the light when there is a shortage of ideas: it is then that the form comes to the fore and is painful to the eyes and the ears. Actually there is nothing for the form to obscure. Thus, form is not the nucleus of the matter. Again and again we come back to the same thing, to the content and meaning of poetical phenomena, or to their absence.

Any nutshell can be broken if there is a hope of finding even the tiniest edible kernel inside it. All the intricacies of form can be seen through if there is only a chance of grasping the content. When the shell is empty we find we have laboured in vain, and this is the time to reproach formalism. Then you can expect the simple-minded reader or listener to come along and say that the "emperor is naked!" This is true of all the arts and letters but it is particularly true of poetry, of literature, where it is most noticeable and especially intolerable.

In his speech on the magazines *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*, Andrei Zhdanov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, with great strength and clarity confronted all Soviet art in general, and poetry and literature in particular, with the demand to work in the service of the people, in the firing line on the ideological front. First and foremost this means that our poetry,

[1] From Arthur Symon's translation of "Art Poetique".

like all other branches of the arts and letters, must be the poetry of a militant world outlook. This in turn means that poetry must possess that world outlook. If this is so, can it possibly be "foolish" or "silly"? Never! The poet must be a politician, a philosopher and an historian, in general, a man of deep and extensive knowledge, a man who knows the souls of others, a man who is keen-sighted and armed against all eventualities. And this he must be in his verses, in their content, in their very words and not simply in declarations.

All the living traditions of Russian poetry show us that this not only can be achieved but that it is the open road to creative work. From Lomonosov to Pushkin, from Lermontov to Blok, from Nekrasov to Mayakovsky runs the course of the relay race *ad astra*. One generation passes on to the next the staff, the staff of poetry, a poetry that is clever and intellectual, a poetry with content, a progressive vehicle of culture, a poetry that is implacable in the struggle against all intellectual poverty whether it is the stuttering of Tredyakovsky, the officious emotion of Benediktov or even the lofty lyricism of Fet—in the long run they are all the same! The democrats of the 60's could not forgive Fet his endless "whispers, timid sighs, the trills of his nightingale" not only because he tried to escape from life but also because he was not sufficiently exacting in his intellectual demands. Even old Vyazemsky with his reactionary grumbling and open obscurantism was more acceptable to them—he was an open enemy, they could fight him but Fet gave them no grounds for a fight.

When Mayakovsky, addressing his brothers of the pen, exclaimed:

> How dare you call yourself poet,
> Mewing, like a guileless gull!
> Today the world needs a poet to show it
> The force of his fist on its thickened skull!

his wrath was of the same sort as that experienced by the democrats of the 60's. The great poet of the Revolution was disgusted by the poetry of the singing birds and their "foolishness."

In the process of literary development, in the struggle and change of poetic phenomena, intellectual poetry has always won the day. Poetry that was vitally interested in capturing the attention of the biggest possible audience, of having the greatest possible number of readers, always could and did win any contest.

The young Turgenev, like many of his contemporaries, was enraptured by Benediktov's verses: "no less than the others," he wrote later, "I was fed on those verses, I knew many of them by heart, I went into raptures over *The Rock*, *The Mountains* and even *Mathilda* on her stallion, proud of her fine, steady seat." When he came across Belinsky's sharp criticism, in an article that threw down the idol of the youth of those days, Turgenev was at first beside himself. "But it's a funny thing," Turgenev continues, "while reading the article and afterwards, to my own astonishment, even to my vexation, I found myself unwillingly agreeing with the "criticizer"—I discovered that his arguments were convincing and irrefutable. I was ashamed of this unexpected impression and tried to choke this voice within me; in my circle of friends I spoke very sharply of Belinsky and his article . . . but in the depths of my soul something continued whispering to me that he was right. . . Some time passed and I ceased reading Benediktov altogether."

This, of course, is all in the distant past—the literary battles of the 30's of the last century are of little interest today. The case of Benediktov, however, is a typical one in the history of literature. In many variations it was constantly repeating itself. "The false wisdom fitfully gleams and smoulders before the all-conquering sun of Reason." [1]

I think that the young Soviet poet Mikhail Lvov has formulated the purpose and reason of an art that is based on ideas and intelligence better than anybody else in recent years:

> What power subordinates the poet?
> When is he free? When is he bound?
> Whose judgement does he find most sound?
> To whom, in all of his creations,
> Does poet humbly bend the knee?
> He bows to his own generation,
> The truth of the age—his authority.
> He dare not waver in the storm,
> Nor take offense from life, from time,
> And thus his verse, in printed form,
> Will be conceived within his mind.
>
> Not for a superficial glance,
> Not for an outburst, quickly spent,
> Not for impressions born of chance
> Are poets' dear-bought efforts meant.
> . . . And if we stoop to florid style,
> Realistic times will prove us wrong.
> A hundred million realists
> Will help us find more worthy song.

That which the young poet wanted for himself has become an actual fact: a hundred million realists have hurried to our aid.

Here we come to something simple and at the same time serious. A friendly gathering of writers recently discussed an old problem: what is our (the writers') principal means of production (to use the language of economics). The answers varied greatly in their wittiness and originality, ranging from fountain pens, writing pads, bottles of non-freezing ink and well-chewed pencil stumps to the waste-paper basket that was pulled out from under the table—and it was this brute, the deadly enemy, the recipient of poor or unfinished work, that was held forth as the basic means of production used by a writer. One of the writers, one of the youngest among us, stood up and said:

"It is my belief that the chief instrument of my life's work, my art and my craftsmanship is not to be found here in this study. It is there in big auditoriums of the colleges and in the workers' clubs. It is any tribune or platform which enables me to meet thousands of new people face to face—people that we poets need in our work. Yesterday they

[1] From a poem by Pushkin.

were our readers, tomorrow they may be our heroes. To tell you the truth it is only direct contact with them that has made a writer out of me. Thus it may be that this is our chief means of production."

Here we come again to the "hundred million realists" without whom the existence of our art cannot be contemplated.

And again we must stress the point that far from all writers have considered this a natural situation.

There have been weighty and passionate voices raised in demand of the opposite!

Paul Valéry, in answer to a question put to many people—"Whom does the writer write for?"—admitted: "My poems are more in the nature of an exercise than an act. . . They are more a manoeuvre of my own, something I have ordered myself, than writing intended for the public. . . In dancing, movements of the body do not have a visible purpose and nobody ever thinks that dance should be subordinated to *the laws of the useful rather than the poetic*. . . Neither simplicity nor clarity are absolute magnitudes in poetry, even if you lose (without great regret) any number of readers. . . ."

This is a clear and frank position. The writer has taken the mask off. He is apparently ready to fight for that which is not usually worth fighting for—for his indifference to the other people. Paul Valéry was no exception: before him there were writers who admitted to writing for the "happy few." One of them said: "I address myself only for the Pleiades." Another said: "And I write for five friends." Another might have said: "And I for my Angora cat."

Even if we take into consideration the tinge of bitterness in these words (regret for the lost illusions of youth, for the inability to find a large audience, etc.) all these voices still lead to one point, to one conscious goal: the artist, the master of culture, its slave, herald and executive, assumes that it is possible for him—sometimes he simply desires it—to exist *apart* from the people, *outside* of history, *outside* of time. What does this mean? It means only that he excludes his work from the sum total of human labour. If we carry this to its logical conclusion *he excludes it from culture*. Paul Valéry says as much himself: "I like working only for the sake of working." No doubt this is all very witty but a squirrel in his revolving cage could say the same!

It may seem alluring to presumptious youth as being not without charm and inner truth. Of course it does! Who of us, in our youth, has not been guilty of donning this mantle of splendid isolation? I know a number of young people who, having taken the first steps in the world of poetry, have acquired a special taste for the problem of their own genius. More the pity for them if they remain stuck with this problem! Our society is legitimately and ruthlessly indifferent to all forms of megalomania: the same is true of our readers.

Everybody knows that there are only two directions to take to the end of any road. One of them, it is said, must eventually lead to Rome. No doubt the other leads us away from Rome into the remote distance.

Let us call Rome, our Rome, the meeting point of the world's roads, not merely an abstraction but the historical reality of culture and of time, the present workaday world of the people and of mankind that is the rendezvous we shall appoint for our meeting.

II

However we may approach the question of training young people in the sphere of poetry and literature, whether from the standpoint of the Institute of Literature in Moscow or simply the personal contact between old writers and the youngsters, or any other form of training (including consultations and literary groups at the editorial offices of our magazines)—whatever form of training we may have in view, the daily task, the common round, is always the same: the general educational and cultural development of young people who have begun to write.

But what are these editors' literary groups but a means of spreading a superficial and inert attitude to a general education on the part of the young people who belong to them? As a general rule these groups revolve around one single theme like the earth revolves around the sun. Their eternal theme is—the work of the members of the group. It is discussed from all angles. At times the members of the group are given a concrete job such as compiling their own anthologies. All this may be very nice but it is hardly a satisfactory education for the youth!

Moscow is bursting with cultural treasures that have been accumulated in the course of centuries. Museums, theatres, book repositories, concert halls, famous squares, streets and whole blocks of houses where more than once the fate of generations has been decided, huge factories with their militant traditions. . . Impossible to enumerate all this wealth! It must be unrolled at the feet of our youth like a beautiful carpet; the doors to our national and revolutionary culture must be thrown open wide before the young writer—this is the basic problem to be solved in training people for creative work.

Premature professionalism, personal tendencies and a number of other causes that are not worth mentioning and which in any case cannot always be foreseen, lead to the young author or poet setting out in life with a very one-sided equipment. He has a good knowledge of the technique of his art, he knows his favourite writers by heart—classics and moderns—he is well informed on everything pertaining to his contemporary literary world (here I am taking the best case), but nevertheless his mental outlook is extremely limited. Purely literary interests have completely filled his mind. What has he seen of life? Where has he been able to expand his intellectual attainments or acquire a breadth of outlook?

He has had to postpone his real education until some problematic future, until that "tomorrow which never comes." When the tomorrow becomes "yesterday", when the writer reaches the ripe old age of thirty or so, he has already become a dyed-in-the-wool professional: he is printed in the big magazines

and the newspapers, he has published a book. Try to examine him in, say, mathematics, or logic, or history! Is the book of the stars an open book to him? Do the sea waves whisper to him?

The most dangerous thing of all is that early professionalism very often brings with it the very opposite to what it was hoped to achieve. Parnassus is a steep and slippery Mount. How many of those who scratched their knees climbing it in the days of their youth tumbled headlong down at the risk of their necks? These were the unsuccessful ones. Having no second profession or trade, knowing no discipline or "metier" they become the ne'er-do-wells of the literary world whose total capital is reduced to their aplomb and advances they can get from publishers.

I shall not deal further with the drama of their lives despite the fact that it presents a sorrowful enough picture. Every writer stands in need of a steady inflow of living material, of living impressions of life, as much as he does of air and bread. A second profession, another object in life, can provide this material, in fact it cannot help providing it. Chekhov and Veresayev were doctors, Lomonosov was a scientist, Shchedrin held an important administrative post, Shevchenko was an artist, Lermontov and Leo Tolstoy were army officers. Our literature would have been poorer by a number of outstanding works if Ognyov and Makarenko had not been teachers or Krymov and Vassili Grossman, engineers. [1]

The author of these lines receives numerous letters from young doctors and engineers and from members of other trades and professions that are highly respected in our country. These letters are from writers who are making a beginning. For a literary career and for fame they are prepared to pay an exhorbitant and perhaps even a catastrophic price: they are ready to relinquish their original professions. Is it necessary to prove the worthlessness and the danger of such a proposition? They do not realize that their work as engineers or doctors is the straightest road, an easiest road, by which they may become writers of true merit: they will have what is probably the finest opportunity of accumulating enough experience to be able to share it with their readers.

It is, therefore, necessary to propose to our young writers not to become professionals at an early age and tread the beaten path of literature: on the contrary—get about in the world, see the boundless expanses of our country, mix with people, and take other things in your hands besides pen and paper.

Here I must make one important reservation applicable to the present generation of poets and writers who have been through the school of war, who have served in the army. The war, of course, was no substitute for a university. But the very fact of spending many years—the decisive years of adolescence and budding manhood—in the spanned conditions of war, shoulder to shoulder with the whole nation, is worth quite a lot. This is something to the credit of our youth. They have really seen things that are worth telling others about. But when this experience is exhausted the writer will be confronted by what is at first a staggering vacuum: where to go next, what to write about, what to see? All the geography of the great campaigns from the Volga to the Elbe, from the Black Sea to the Barents Sea will all have been finely expressed in iambi and amphibrachs. Because this early experience of the years of war has been so great and so intense, it should be accompanied by an equally intense cultural growth. This is essential if only to be able to express in art what has been experienced.

Once more I shall have to give the floor to one of our younger poets, Semyon Gudzenko:

> I was an infantryman then,
> Inured to dirt, to battle's roar,
> Until I finally became
> A journalist reporting war.

This is the ordinary road, the fate of many thousands of young Soviet people who in some way or another distinguished themselves in the army at the front. Amongst them there are those who not only became journalists reporting war, but who rose high enough to receive a marshal's baton.

The conclusion at which Gudzenko arrives is, therefore, all the more imperative and of general significance:

> And if we have to fight again,
> Why, then we have to fight.
> I'll man a gun as I did then
> And count it quite all right.
> At first a corporal will be
> My senior in command,
> Then I'll descend to poetry
> From this exalted stand.

In unison with the reader I fervently hope that neither Gudzenko nor his coevals will have to do any fighting for a long time to come; here, however, I want to draw your attention to something else. The steep and slippery Mount Parnassus does not appear to the young man of our times as a mountain at all when compared with that other steep slope that he had to ascend at the beginning of his road to life: the war, the front, the immeasurable concentration of moral forces in 1941. Gudzenko, of course, will remain an artist, a poet, a writer and a journalist, but his noble discontent with himself and with his friends is very justifiable: To be a private in the ranks under his corporal and then to "descend to poetry from this exalted stand"—has a wider meaning than it appears to have at first sight. The real corporal for Gudzenko and his coevals will always be time, life with its laws and demands.

We must give what is due to Gudzenko and to many other poets who are his seniors and juniors. The very necessity of further growth has become a prerequisite for their creative or any other form of work. We see how this force that we call an urge for growth has pulled them out of the towns, out of the atmosphere of the editor's office, out of their literary groups and their self-adulation and sent them to remote parts of the country, to the places

[1] These four are famous Soviet writers, all dead except Grossman.

where the new struggle for the fulfillment of the five-year plan is being waged. Nobody gave them a hint of what to do, they realized themselves that side by side with millions of Soviet people are to be found thousands of future verses and poems waiting to be born. This was the origin of cycles of poems about the Donets basin by M. Matusovsky, about the Urals by S. Vassiliev, about Transcarpathian Ukraine by S. Gudzenko, and about Stalingrad by M. Lukonin. These are poems by different poets and varying greatly in their intensity, expressiveness and quality. But all of them bear witness to the growing spiritual wealth, of the culture of our young writers.

III

Amongst the young men who returned from the war, however, there are some who interested themselves mostly in the shop windows and in the comforts of the hotels when they were abroad. They very frequently use the word "culture" to mean cigarette lighters, nylons, face powder and other consumer goods.

Everything that the people of the West have accumulated for their well-being and comfort, everything that they have patiently made part of their daily life, has been naively christened with the lofty name of "culture."

In this way the term culture has acquired a very extensive meaning. The term culture is used to mean—large editions of the classics and tooth brushes, a good sound educational system for the country and an ability to select the correct knives and forks at dinner.

It, therefore, becomes important for us to determine exactly what we really mean by culture: we must limit the meaning of the word and free our conception of culture from silt and slag, from false interpretations.

The habit of using a toothbrush is, in itself, a useful habit, but it is still not culture. Gentlemanly manners (to use the fish knife and tie a bow properly, etc.) are also not culture. These are the visible surface of culture, the alluvial stratum. Sometimes this upper surface is at loggerheads with culture and sometimes is even hostile to it. Regarded superficially, the conception of culture amounts to taking a rough diamond from the village, and polishing it to make an urban dweller, just polishing but going no deeper. This is the process of the metamorphosis of man typical in the bourgeois West and is, alas, often the only one a man experiences in the course of his life. In the West hundreds of novels and stories—tragically sad and merry as a smoking room anecdote—have been written around this theme.

We see, therefore, that there is culture and "culture!" Where does one end and the other begin? Is there actually any line of demarcation between them?

Genuine culture is something that is gained by generations in the course of slow, persistent labour: culture is not built up so that it may be lost somewhere on the way like old-fashioned clothing or a worn-out gramophone record. Culture is the whole history of the people that preserves it, it is the whole future that they look forward to. It is the little book of Pushkin's poems that the officer carries in his haversack, it is that officer's gentleness with any child that comes his way. When a barefooted Ukrainian boy in the Kiev countryside calls his national poet (Shevchenko) "batko Taras," this is a sign of an old culture that cannot be wiped out. When farmers in the heart of the Caucasus welcome a guest, offer him a horn of new wine and sing or recite hundreds of lines of Rust'hveli's poem by way of a toast, this is also a militant, original culture that is as deathless as the language of the people that created it. When the whole Soviet people saw in Jambul the miracle of a 20th-century Homer, when his masterly oral compositions were printed and became books and were then translated into other languages of the Soviet peoples, this was the victorious progress of culture, single in its ideas, with its ideals and final purpose unheard of. Our festivals of national art are also to be counted amongst the same victories—not only because they exist but because they arouse an interest throughout the whole country. The dance of mountain shepherds is just as valuable to this culture as the new symphony that carried a breath of the siege of Leningrad to two continents. This culture gave an alphabet together with social justice to the nomad tribes of yesterday and at that same hour on that same day an astronomer, another servant of culture discovered a new star in the universe. The first ABC book and together with it a new star that required powerful refractors and extensive intellectual research are not two extremes as remote from each other as heaven and earth; on the contrary the heavens are ours, they sit at the round table with us; and the earth is ours with its inhabitants, the poor, the shepherds, miners, ploughboys, its millions of "simple people."

Every day in our country every one of us has the opportunity to feel the dynamics and the style of our culture, the culture of a Socialist society which has for all time opened wide before the youth the way for any creative activity: choose for yourself, search for what you need. There are mountain crags in your path and there are milestones marking the way. The road goes into the past and the future. Here are stellar maps, Heraclitus' fluid universe, the boiling cauldron of intra-atomic energy, Einstein's relativity of time and space. Here are the shades of Shakespeare's heroes and Beethoven's violin concertos. Can you reach the pole? Is there enough air to breathe in the stratosphere? Will you get stage fright before an audience of many hundreds? And can you sleep at night face to face with your own manuscript?

That's genuine culture.

Culture is always dynamic.

It is the constructive inspiration of many wills and talents, voluntarily competing and voluntarily united for a common purpose, for one ideal. This is how the great monuments of the past were built — the Parthenon, the Kremlin and the Gothic cathedrals. This is how new revolutionary directions in science, philosophy and art are developed. This is how groups of people working together in any field and inspired by one idea are formed. This was well known in the days of the Renaissance and is well understood in our society.

Culture, however, is not only dynamic in the production of values. Culture is also vitally concerned with the reproduction of those who serve it. Culture, therefore, appeals always to the youth. The most decisive, the true symbol of our culture is to be found in our college lecture halls, filled with daylight and the hum of young voices.

Here the great historic significance of culture is born. Caring for the future it must also care for the past. Book repositories and museums must grow up as the neighbours and relatives of the colleges. For whom do we collect and preserve the remains of past greatness and collapse, the flint axes, hieroglyphs, folios of misconceptions, manuscripts of great discoveries, if not for the children who will come here to study tomorrow?

And lastly, there is just one more distinguishing feature of culture.

Culture was never a household privilege of the elect. Culture has no place for the dilletante, for the patron of the arts, the man who merely wishes to kill time. The serf theatre whose shows were enjoyed only by the landlord and his guests was not yet culture. And the book of decadent poems printed in fifty copies for distribution amongst the author's friends has already ceased to be culture. The works of the master artists locked up in the merchant's palace are again not culture, they have been cut off from culture. Culture will come flying back to them the moment the doors of the palaces, salons and amateur collections are opened to admit people from the street. Then, perhaps, there will be a reassessment of much that has been carefully preserved and the street will have a decisive word to say. The street will probably make mistakes in giving its appraisal but it will learn everything by its mistakes! From the viewpoint of the snobs such an event does not help in the development and progress of culture. And so the snobs go away and wait for something. Sometime perhaps they will be invited to act as arbiters of fashion. It is a general rule, however, that life does not wait and manages without them.

IV

The experience gained by our young culture has not yet been studied or even properly recorded. Incidentally, this is a matter of some importance today at a time when it has been a will of history that Soviet culture should grow immeasurably both for internal consumption and as an export commodity, when the eyes of the people of the world are turned towards the Soviet Union.

It will be remembered that A. Zhdanov said in the above-mentioned speech: "Is it fitting for us, Soviet patriots, representatives of progressive Soviet culture, to adopt the role of either worshippers of bourgeois culture or its pupils? Naturally, our literature, which reflects a social system higher than any bourgeois democratic system and a culture many times higher than bourgeois culture, has the right to teach others the new moral for all mankind."

This summarizes the new tasks with which history and life confront our art. They are many in number but the basic task for all art and for literature in particular is to be the instrument of the national self-cognition of the Soviet people; the self-cognition being always the conscience of the people.

We have to keep our eyes wide open to see the full image of victory. Victory has brought much. First of all it has brought life and liberty to millions of tormented people, life and liberty that are incompatible with the very existence of fascism. Victory has confirmed our confidence in our own way of life and in the justice of our cause. It has proved to the whole world our moral superiority over the enemy, our strength and the indestructibility of our state and our social system.

If we sometimes lack the polished surface and streamlined forms, I can assure you, we will gain them in time! The able hands and fine skill of the craftsman will acquire the necessary know-how.

There are people who believe that at times human consciousness has the right to retreat before the scope and majesty of that which has been or is being accomplished. Why should we, the contemporaries, it is said, bother our heads in vain trying to estimate distances and scope! We've had enough of it, it's time for a good laugh at the operetta, time for a dance on the edge of the volcano's crater, on a dance floor built from blocks of cooled lava. Why should the tiny sea shell try to compete with the ocean? Why, the ocean resounds inside the shell!

It is not true! It is a thousand times worth while to compete with the ocean, with time and with history. Only this may be called culture. People say that we have had enough of sorrow and sadness, of hate propaganda, gruesome photographs showing enemy atrocities, enough books and films full of tanks and shooting, enough heroics and tragedy—I always want to turn my back on those weakening and anesthetizing speeches. They are not worthy of the memoryor of the conscience of aSovietman.

A thousand times no! The war is not over, and victory is not over. It continues in hundreds and thousands of living, inspired, strong or weak (it is all the same) human beings. It continues in the biographies of the victors whose creative and constructive work makes a great demand on us. Lastly, it continues in our memories. To wipe out a memory is equivalent to wiping out the future. Both of them embody the fate of culture in the loftiest and most decisive meaning of the word. The only decisive meaning, in fact. As in the tragic days of war, so today, after the festival of victory, we may say that the banner of our culture is emblazoned with the words: "With this have ye conquered!"

This means that Soviet culture is again in the firing line and is calling for its warriors to fight for a just cause.

Our poetry is in the firing line together with all other aspects of our culture—it goes into battle clad in the shining armour of reason. This poetry is not a hysterical lady from the society salons nor is it a headless winged creature of gas and tinfoil. It is the comrade-in-arms of Mayakovsky, the daughter of a great people—kindly, eternally young, with burning eyes and a sonorous voice who finds her way into the hearts of those who hear her.

PAVEL ANTOKOLSKY

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ILYA ILF AND EVGENI PETROV

Both were born in Odessa, Ilya Ilf in 1897, Evgeni Petrov in 1903. Odessa was the scene of their boyhood and youth; it also saw the beginning of their literary careers. However, sheer chance brought them together. Only in 1923 and in Moscow, then a meeting place for all budding Soviet writers, did they meet—in the office of a railwaymen's newspaper where Ilf, after trying his hand at a host of trades, did feuilleton writing and Petrov reporting.

The idea to team up occurred to them much later and at first they took it quite casually. They decided to attempt a satirical novel, little counting on its success. However, from the very first steps of their joint work they felt that they made a perfect team. And when the book was completed and enthusiastically hailed first by their literary confreres and later by the public at large, they realized that their meeting and decision to collaborate were by no means to be treated casually, that working together their writings had tremendous possibilities in store for them.

During the ten years they collaborated Ilya Ilf and Evgeni Petrov produced two novels—*Diamonds to Sit On* and *The Golden Calf*, a book of their travels through America, countless short stories and feuilletons. Today their books are published in all parts of the world and are continually being reprinted in the Soviet Union. They have won great popularity among Soviet readers.

It is all the more sad to think that both men are no longer among the living and cannot enjoy the homage paid them throughout their country.

Some people, on moving into furnished quarters go on living in them without changing a thing. At the very best they may place the desk nearer the light or move the easy chair so as to gain more space. In other spheres of activity these people react in very much the same way. They adapt themselves easily to a new field with its peculiar set of traditions and customs and go on abiding passively by the old order of things, feeling no need for change, anxious to preserve both their own and other people's peace of mind.

Petrov was not like that. I can just picture him moving into new rooms—planting his suitcase on the floor and after critically eyeing his surroundings, setting about the job of moving the wardrobe and groaning under its weight, demanding that a couch which impressed him unfavourably be removed altogether and—what is most characteristic of him—earnestly trying to convince the neighbour attracted by the racket, to make similar changes in his room.

He was that way in private life and at work and he remained that way, so we are told by those who were with him, at the front. He went about his work as correspondent with his customary enthusiasm, and an insatiable desire to be in the thick of things. His frontline dispatches were always to the point and scrupulously accurate. At the same time they possessed the genuine artistic touch. With the utmost lucidity he reproduced the scene and impact of the frontline episodes he described. He witnessed the fighting on numerous sectors of the front from the Barents to the Black seas, now writing about towns, razed to the ground by the Germans, now of the travail of the submariners; he spoke to the men and their generals, chatted with flyers and partisans, he was in besieged Sevastopol at the time when the ring of blockade tightened around the gallant city. And it is with the greatest fondness and esteem that this enthusiastic writer who took hardship in his stride and whose belief in ultimate victory was never shaken, is remembered by all who knew him in those sombre days.

Petrov met his death in an aeroplane crash on his return from Sevastopol in the summer of 1942.

All his readers and friends were deeply grieved by his death, for they realized all he might have accomplished.

In his deep concern for all things, his longing to change everything, and to convince all around him of the necessity for this change, Petrov was not always contented with the role of writer and turned spokesman, polemist, organizer, rebel.

Ilya Ilf was a different type of person. There was about him, if one may be permitted to say so, a certain innocent shyness. In his reminiscences Petrov speaks of him as of one "who is the last to enter a room." These words give just the correct slant on his personality.

Yet his sense of civic responsibility was as active as Petrov's. Positively everything was his concern. The building of park benches, the planting of grain, the method of manufacturing automobiles, the teaching of history in schools, street and square layouts, the organi-

zational structure of the writers' union and numerous other things gave him plenty of food for long and serious thought.

With a practical eye he sized up the things around him—the eye of a citizen who feels himself as much a master in his country as he does in his home. Indeed that feeling alone could inspire such an attitude of deep,thoughtful concern for the world around him.

I remember a slogan which he made up in jest, and was fond of quoting whenever he came across one of the numerous inconveniences of the life of the early thirties, or the high-flown posters on cleanliness and education by which some executives wished to combat these evils instead of really doing something about them. It ran like this: "Don't fight for cleanliness, just do some sweeping!" The last word he accented with a violent conviction which in general was characteristic of his manner of speech.

A ramble through the city with him was a source of infinite pleasure. His remarks on the architecture of the buildings, the attire and faces of the passers-by, the signs and advertisements, the displays in the shop windows and all else that goes with the urban scene, were such a magnificent combination of humour and common sense that time and space during these walks seemed to fade away entirely.

Indifference—this was a vice positively unknown to him!

His ability to marvel at things and his interest in everything were truly amazing. Nothing ever escaped his notice. And should there be nothing in his field of vision for the space of an hour or so, save a humble match box, I am certain,he would not be bored.Coughing slightly, he would set about examining it to discover a host of remarkable things about it, and what is more, would be certain to think up a way of improving it.

His interest in life was not that of a collector of rarities. Like every really fine person, in the Soviet sense of the word, he was instinctively a reformer. In this respect he and Petrov were kindred spirits.

In their books there is not the slightest suggestion of the derision of the misanthrope, which now and then comes out in the satiric works of those who are unable to perceive clearly the purpose and import of satire.

Whatever Ilf and Petrov wrote was written with the conviction that the hideous and ludicrous are but transient obstacles in the way of building a new society, the foundation of which has been laid in our country.

Their satire is optimistic. While they ridiculed, taking up the cudgels in all earnestness, theyunderstood perfectly what they were fighting for and never for a moment doubted the victorious outcome of their struggle.

They revealed the same integrity both in their writings and in life and as such are remembered by all, even by the most casual acquaintances.

Ilf had a positive aversion for any sort of pretentiousness. He was a good listener, a man who dressed and spoke with the utmost simplicity, he might have been taken for almost anybody—an engineer, a physician or a schoolmaster. And, I dare say, he wished for nothing better.

The fear to appear commonplace, wellnigh professional with many writers, artists, actors and musicians was absolutely alien to him. He even cherished the idea that many of life's commonplace words and deeds ought to be held sacred.

I remember the time when a daughter was born to Ilf, he looked at me somewhat askance and said, in the way of all happy fathers:

"The birth of a human being, what a miracle it is!"

Here, I must admit, I couldn't refrain from remarking on the triteness of the phrase. Whereupon he took me to task. He railed, and rightly so, as I was soon to realize, against people who try to be original where there is no call for originality whatever. I don't quite remember the arguments he used in defending utterances and sentiments with millennial tradition behind them but I'm ready to swear, that not one apologist of originality known to me reasoned so independently and spoke with such eloquence and conviction as Ilf did in championing the commonplace.

Ilf may have been thought a dour person. And indeed only civility tempered his reticence in regard to the stupid, conceited nonentities he came across now and then in the course of his work in the world of letters, cinema and the theatre. He was hard on these bounders, because he felt how incongruous was their existence amidst the struggle and work of real people. Whenever such a specimen in "ermine trousers with dangling tails," as he used to say, would appear, Ilf grew hard and relentless, not only because the man was stupid and ludicrous, but also because he recognized in these things a danger and menace to society.

Here are a few entries from Ilf's journals that deal with people of this sort.

"Writers whose books are a flop are always the object of commiseration and everybody makes a fuss about them. I'm tired of that. Let's drink to those whose books are worth it!

"A literary coterie which snobbishly worship those of their number who earn a lot. . . The making of a career, the attempt to found a group, all failed shamefully because the main thing was wanting—the ability to write, nothing in the soul save a tender upbringing, a fondness for dabbling in the arts, and other drawing-room accomplishments."

There is very little leniency in these notes and they may well give the impression that Ilf was a harsh and unfeeling person. This, however, would be wrong. For, in him irony and strictness were combined with good will, gentleness and thoughtfulness. He was reticent towards his colleages and was a hard taskmaster, but there was in this treatment of his far greater concern than in the ostentatious, false, indifferent tolerance that still is so often the case among us.

What is simpler than to mumble off some non-committal remark on meeting the author of a book you didn't care for. You remain unruffled, don't make an enemy and go on being with him on the same friendly, indifferent terms.

That was something Ilf could never do. He was an extremely exacting reader. Though a professional writer himself, he was more interested in the experiences of life contained in the books he read than in their style and literary technique. If the writer had taken a subject that was petty and trivial and had exaggerated it—heaven help him if he came in Ilf's way.

In 1939 Ilf's journals and diaries were collected and published. They cover the period between 1925 and 1937. The first entries occur irregularly, jotted down when the occasion arose in leather-bound notebooks which he invariably carried around with him for that purpose. In the years right before his death, his journals assumed a different character. Illness kept him away from Petrov for long periods of time. The urge to write did not leave him, however, for a single day. Yet he did not wish to undertake a serious work alone and he assuaged his hunger for writing with brief jottings of the things he saw, ideas in the rough, meditations, reminiscences, entries in his diary, sketches for future stories, and numerous tiny, quite finished miniatures—gems of brevity, craftsmanship and wit.

From Ilf's notes the reader learns what an observant traveller he was, what remarkable feeling he possessed for words and their different shades, how exacting he was in his work, how rich was his imagination and how appropriate his humour.

Here are some of the jottings picked at random:

"The Sevastopol railway station. The open-air, warm, starry. The poplars come right up to the train. Night—no clatter, no uproar. The train leaves at one-thirty. Roses in all the coaches."

"Cold, noble, and chaste, like a beam of artificial ice, towered the Empire State Building."

"How dull it must feel to be a caryatid and prop up some hideous balcony."

"It's easy enough to write: 'No ray of light penetrated into his cell.' You didn't copy it from anybody yet the words are not yours."

"Went for a walk with Sasha on a clear but chilly day in spring. Overturned dustbins, shabby coats, frozen spittle, damp plaster on the walls of the houses—I was always fond of ice-clad, red-nosed spring."

"Upon discovering that he had no tail the Pithecanthropus grew frightfully upset. That, he reasoned, would make him inferior to the apes. It did not even occur to him that he was the master of the world. His spouse, the young lady Pithecanthropus, kept nagging him about it, quite openly declaring that she regretted she had not married the orang-outang who courted her the previous summer."

"A certain fear possesses mankind—it immures gramophone records and films, anxious to leave the memory that it lived, that there was such a thing as civilization."

The above give only a fragmentary idea of the contents of Ilf's journals and diaries. What is remarkable about his notes which cover a period of twelve years is that now that they have been put together they give the impression of a single, carefully conceived composition. In turn they plunge the reader into melancholy, laughter, and serious thought. With their vivid word pictures like some smooth and rythmic verse they become deeply ingrained in the memory. Subtlety, keenness of observation, charming lyricism and sparkling humour make them real literary gems. And what is most important, from them emerges a picture of the man himself, complex, clever and talented—the personality of the writer, which was hitherto fused in the mind of the reader with that of his constant collaborator and friend.

At the suggestion of a certain editor Ilf and Petrov once published a humorous interview on how they write together. And it is, I believe, the only story about their joint literary endeavour.

"Our team has proved a difficult proposition. The Goncourts, it may be assumed, had an easier time of it. After all, they were brothers. And we aren't even related. We are not even coevals. And even of different nationality: one a Russian (unfathomable Slav soul), the other a Jew (unfathomable Jewish soul).

"And so it's hard to work together.

"It is hardest of all to get to the point where both of us are in the mood to settle down and write.

"We're all set: the inkstand is full to the brim, in the next room someone is playing 'Oh, her black eyes' on the piano with one finger, a pigeon is peeping into the window, invitations for meetings have been torn up and thrown away. In a word everything is just ready for us to settle down and write.

"But now things begin happening.

"While one of us is brimming over with creative vitality yearning to present humanity with a new work of art—a broad canvas, so to say—the other (Oh, unfathomable Slav soul) reclines on the divan, his feet in the air, and is engrossed in a history of naval battles. What is more, he claims to be ill, seriously (most probably mortally) ill.

Sometimes, it happens quite the other way.

"The Slav soul rapidly rises from the sick-bed, averring he never felt so inspired in all his life. He is quite willing to write through the night. Let the telephone buzz away—don't answer it, let visitors hammer at the door—away with them! To write, only to write. And we're going to be diligent and stimulating, we'll treat the subject of our sentence with the utmost care, and fondle the predicate, we'll be kind and gentle to people and strict with ourselves.

"But his partner (Oh, unfathomable Jewish soul) is in no mood to write, he can't write. He has, if you please, lost his inspiration. They'd have to wait. And in any case he has made up his mind to go to the Far East, to broaden his outlook.

"A few days go by before he is dissuaded from acting so rashly. It's all so difficult, so very difficult.

"One is well, the other is ill. The invalid gets well, the healthy one is off to the theatre. He gets back from the theatre, only to find the invalid entertaining a few friends. The friends, finally, leave and it would seem that at last it was time to settle down for some work. But the robust one goes and has a tooth ex-

tracted and turns invalid. And what's more, his suffering is so great you'd think it was a leg and not a tooth he'd lost. However, that doesn't prevent him from reading to the end his history of naval battles.

"How we do manage to write together after all is a mystery to both of us."

This interview, with all its joking, most probably, contains a good deal of truth. However, it far from reveals all the difficulties of their working together. More light is thrown on this matter by Petrov's reminiscences of Ilf:

"To write together was not twice as easy, as may have been deduced by simple arithmetic—but ten times harder. It was not just a union of forces, but rather a constant duel, exhausting but fruitful, each relinquishing to the other his full life's experiences, his literary tastes, his entire store of thoughts and observations. These were relinquished with a struggle. In the struggle experience was subjected to doubt, literary taste was sometimes scoffed at. Thoughts were branded stupid and observation superficial. Constantly we criticized each other most severely. The criticism, dealt in humorous thrusts, hurt all the more. When we sat down to write compassion took leave of us."

Readers of *Diamonds to Sit On* and *Golden Calf* can hardly imagine that these smoothly written books that are read with breathless interest are the product of long, stubborn and painstaking labour. The writer's labour may be likened to the construction of a railway—just as the speed of the train depends on the care with which the roadbed is made, the ties and rails laid, so the reaction of the reader, his absorption in the book depends on the thoroughness of the plot, the careful choice of words, the ability to discard the superfluous and retain the important. The more polished each line of a short story or book is, the swifter and more spontaneous is the reader's reaction.

Ilf and Petrov knew this, and that is why their books are a great delight to both adults and children the world over.

Will their books live long? Who knows? Humanity may advance so rapidly within the next few years that stories about the trivial doings of money grabbers, blockheads and swindlers, stories about petty creatures who sacrifice to their one passion "to live better", the possibility "to be better", will lose their significance. Already now a good deal about what Ilf and Petrov wrote has ceased to exist in the Soviet Union and much of it has already undergone a cardinal change. But what matter is it if reality has changed, why should that rob their books of their charm?

We go on reading today Bocaccio's stories about crafty monks, plundering corsairs and the illicit amours of titled ladies, don't we?

Do not the doleful vicissitudes and chivalrous deeds of Don Quixote still cast their spell over us?

Have Mark Twain's old-fashioned Yankees, or Dickens' big-hearted simpletons, or Gogol's patriarchal monsters, so curiously unlike the people around us, lost their interest for us?

GEORGI MUNBLIT

The Old Urals Plant — *B. Joganson*

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NEW BOOKS

The Soviet Theatre and Present-Day Reality. Collected materials. Published by the All-Russian Theatrical Society. Moscow. 256 pages.

The articles and statements collected in the volume under review are by prominent Soviet literary and theatrical people who express their views on various problems confronting them in their work and their post-war tasks. These tasks were very clearly defined in the decisions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on questions of literature and art and were outlined by Andrei Zhdanov in his speeches on the magazines *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*. These documents constitute the first part of the book.

The second part of the book begins with a comprehensive article by Alexander Fadeyev, General Secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers entitled *Our Immediate Tasks*. The traditions of Russian revolutionary-democratic literature are shown in this article in contrast to the "theoretical" searchings of various formalistic-esthetical schools, as a rule taking their departure from Nietzsche and Bergson. In opposition to the thesis of Oscar Wilde who, paraphrasing Nietzsche, wrote that the measure or reality cannot be applied to art as the latter is more a veil than a mirror, Fadeyev presents the theory of Vissarion Belinsky, the father of Russian literary criticism, who insisted upon the application of just this test. Without constant appeal to reality and a truthful portrayal of the latter in art, Fadeyev considers that Soviet art cannot fulfill its chief aim—the portrayal of the man who, living under the conditions of the first Socialist state in the world "differs from all others."

Through this specific content of Soviet art and its difference from the art of the West, Fadeyev emphasizes that the capitalist reality in the West today compels its writers to make a choice between "ugly reality" and "unreal beauty." This same choice in its time faced the masters of Russian classic literature; but the latter succeeded in passing between Scylla and Charybdis in search of justice—a noble aim inspired their works and showed them beauty in "ugly reality."

That is why those Western writers who possess the faculty of "truthfully portraying evil" and whose works at the same time contain "good and noble sentiments" are closer to the Soviet reader. Fadeyev points out, however, that before Gorky . . . "our classics as a rule did not present a hero, whose real life influenced the progress of history. Gorky was the first writer whose positive hero was at the same time a historically positive figure, the carrier of the progressive principle of social development. For this reason, Gorky was a true pioneer both with regard to Western and Russian realism. Gorky was the father of Socialist realism."

Touching upon the nature of the conflict in contemporary Soviet literature, Fadeyev sees ". . . the basic conflict of our epoch in the conflict between the new, the Socialist trends and phenomena and all the manifestations of the old and absolete world." And this conflict takes on ". . . the most varied forms" in real life, making it possible to give it an equally varied portrayal in literature. On the basis of this new content of Soviet literature, Fadeyev asserts that in the sphere of literary form also ". . . Soviet writers are true innovators, while the esthetic views of the formalists are out-of-date."

Developing this thought, Fadeyev proceeds by a number of examples taken from the history of Soviet literature to show the progress that has taken place in the form of expressing the new phenomena of life.

Questions of innovation in literature and the progressive significance of this are reflected in an article by the playwright Leonid Leonov entitled *The Theatre of Our Times*. Leonid Leonov writes of the birth of a new type of litterateur whose art is not limited to a knowledge of the rules of entertaining narrative. "Dramaturgy today," writes Leonov, "does not merely need professionals capable of manufacturing an amusing show in four acts, but in the first place it needs the thinkers whom our country has sent ahead if not to explore and map the paths into the future, at least to portray it in poetical metaphor."

Speaking of the out-of-date rules for the traditional structure of a drama, Leonov writes: "The root of the matter here is that the old conception of a subject was built up in the world of yesterday which we have left behind us forever. Its laws ceased to be effective on that threshold which we crossed already in 1917. All things become antiquated. This is not only true of locomobiles or the quaint old tanks travelling at a speed of five kilometres per hour, but also of the technology of the art of playwriting with its obsolete 'eternal triangles' and other devices ridiculous to the modern playgoer. The climate of the world has changed, other mechanisms of human feelings have come into action and, apparently demand other means of portrayal in literature and art."

The author emphasizes that it is not a question of perfecting the existing literary forms, but of their radical breakup and the creation of new ones. This revolution in the sphere of literary form must help the truthful portrayal of those radical changes wrought in the life of the country by Soviet rule. "The driving force of the old 'plough horse'—the propeller has reached its limit, and no matter how swiftly it turns today, it cannot keep up with the requirements of the century. To stand still at that level might endanger the security of the state. And so, the propeller is replaced by the new-born jet engine. It was always so: the carriage gave way to the automobile and the time will doubtlessly come when this modern machine will rest its rusty skeleton in the dust-laden quiet of the museum."

Leonov justly considers that innovation in the field of literary form is closely connected with changes in the contents of literary works, in the artist's scope of interests in reality.

He writes: "I will only share my conjecture with you that from now on the treasure of all future themes and inspirations will be sought not in the spring of illicit love, not in the dark caves of fate and base human passions, but in that vast land of the future whose master is Labour, beautiful human Labour that changes the face of the world."

The social position of the hero of modern literature, and in the first place Soviet literature, is changing. This hero is becoming more and more democratic. Ordinary people, the workers and builders, are now drawing the attention of writers and present the greatest interest to art. This, however, confronts the writer with great difficulties. "The author of today," states Leonid Leonov, "can no longer arrange his hero's day as he sees fit: truthful art demands something else. Our hero cannot spend a week-day in taking his sweetheart to the Bois de Boulogne or seeking his fortune at the gaming tables, even if such existed. The author must follow his hero to the workshop, the laboratory, the scaffoldings of a new giant construction site. He is obliged therefore, to have an intimate knowledge of his hero's profession, which is the driving belt connecting the latter with the whole of the social machine, and a thorough understanding of his psychology, maybe even reflexology, because men of different professions will react differently to one and the same phenomena."

Alexander Tairov, art director of the Moscow Kamerny Theatre, in an article entitled *A New Approach to New Conditions*, develops the problem of the new content and the new form of theatre plays. Speaking of both the difficulties and the achievements in creating a Soviet play in heroic style, Tairov lays down his understanding of the tragic; he does not see the tragic catastrophe as the end of the action, but only as a rubicon to be crossed in the name of the new optimism. As a supporter of realism, Tairov separates this conception from the mere recording of events and regards a blind imitation of reality as contrary to the demands of true art.

Another group of articles, included in the book, is devoted to the contents of post-war works by Soviet playwrights and the ideas presented in these works. Constantine Simonov, in an article headed *Dramaturgy, the Theatre and Life*, writes of the ideals of organizing human society and of combatting the shortcomings of life, which inspire Soviet people in their daily tasks, and determine the work of every leading Soviet artist. Simonov declares that in answer to the reproaches of "tendenciousness" levelled against Soviet art by its enemies, it should be stated that Soviet masters of art are proud of the ideas which they express, they see in them the truth of life and, therefore, strive to give their works an ideological content or make them "tendencious" if you will.

In his article *Great Traditions*, the critic M. Zagorsky quotes Belinsky's words: "To deprive art of the right to serve social interests means not to exalt but to degrade it, because this means depriving it of its most vital force, i. e., thought, making it the object of Sybaritic enjoyment, the toy of idlers. This even means killing it."

The article *To New Heights of Creative Work* by Akaki Khorava, producer and actor, art director of the Rust'hveli Theatre in Georgia, seeks to determine the true nature of the demands made upon the writer to study living reality. Khorava objects to plays, the contents of which are based only on their author's knowledge of book reality. At the same time, he considers that in approaching the life that surrounds him, the author must be able to distingush the typical as ". . . not everything that occurs in life is typical. The typical is that which has a tendency to develop and predominate in the future." Solomon Mikhoels, art director of the Moscow State Jewish Theatre, in his article *To Serve the People, To Create for Them* writes that the Soviet actor is so highly developed intellectually and takes so active a part in modern life that he may well indicate to the playwright any character of our times worthy of personification.

The question of the Soviet theatre's attitude towards plays by Western playwrights is dealt with by Vladimir Prokofiev, in his article: *Unworthy Enthusiasm*. He writes: "Any national limitation is alien to the Soviet theatre. It is the legitimate heir of all that is best in world dramaturgy." In confirmation of this idea Prokofiev points out that plays by Shakespeare, Molière, Goldoni, Lope de Vega, Calderon, and other great Western playwrights are being staged in hundreds of Soviet theatres. "It is sufficient to recall, for instance," he writes, "that John Priestley's play *An Inspector Calls* is now showing in 68 theatres and Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* in 30 theatres; no modern Western playwright dares aspire to such figures in his own country.

But does every Western-European or American play enjoy the right to such popularity on the Soviet stage? Prokofiev considers that the criterion of ideological content and artistic value is the same for Soviet and foreign plays. Many modern Western plays are vulgar and empty. Plays in which the author seeks to hide the poverty of his ideas by petty moralizing are unsuited to the Soviet stage. Lunacharsky's apt characterization, quoted by the author, applies to the great majority of these plays: "The moral truths of these plays are so insignificant that one blushes to admit that it needs four acts of skillfully-woven stage intrigue to prove that pickpocketing or raping innocent girls is a crime."

Vladimir Prokofiev confirms this characterization by an analysis of Somerset Maugham's plays *The Circle* and *Penelope*; Molnar's *One, Two, Three*; Tristan Bernard's *Mon Café*; and Kaufman and Hart's *A Guest to Dinner*. The Soviet theatre needs plays of widely diverse genres, including light ones but ". . . lightness does not mean frivolousness, and entertainment cannot and must not replace ideological content."

The third cycle of articles in the book is devoted to both artistic and organizational questions. M. Khrapchenko, Chairman of the Committee on Arts in the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R., defines the practical problems confronting the theatres and the

necessity for a radical renovation of the repertoire. The authors of this cycle, theatre directors, producers, actors, playwrights, composers and artists recount a number of their artistic undertakings and plans, a part of which have already been carried into effect.

THE COLLECTIVE FARM FIGHT FOR VICTORY

Elzar Maltsev. *Hot Springs*. A novel. *Young Guard* Publishing House. Moscow. 427 pages.

The action of this novel—a first book by a young author—is set in a remote Siberian village in the days of the war. A comprehensive panorama of village life with all the difficulties and misfortunes caused by the fascist invasion of a peaceful country unfolds before the reader. Tragic moments are depicted with perfect truth giving a realistic portrayal of life with no attempt to make life easy for the heroes or gloss over the conditions under which they live.

The book opens with the departure for the front of Vassili, son of the collective farmer Nikita Rodionov. The grief of parting is emphasized by a realistic description of the mournful autumn countryside: the ice-coated wormwood, the wind howling in the telegraph wires, the cawing of the ravens. With the departure of the skilled, experienced men, insurmountable difficulties seem to face those who are left—the old men, the women and the young people. All sorts of shortages upset the farming. But the war arouses a will to victory and an unprecedented persistence in everybody. These collective farmers, living thousands of miles from the front, feel responsible for the fate of the country. Not the struggle for existence that determined the life of the Russian peasant in the old pre-revolutionary villages, but the eager desire to defend the achievements of the new way of life prompts the behaviour of Maltsev's heroes. All the characters in the book are average Soviet citizens. But all of them, even those whose appearance is only episodic, have a definite individuality of their own, speak a language of their own and leave a definite impression on the memory.

His characters of Siberian women are drawn with particular skill.

Events in *Hot Springs* develop along different lines. We'll take two main themes: Fyodor Kudin, unprincipled and malignant, decides to steal seed grain from the collective farm. When he breaks into the barn and begins to fill his sack with grain he discovers that it is damp and beginning to rot. It must be dried immediately, otherwise the farm will lose its entire seed fund. Kudin is faced with a dilemma: to keep silent and condemn the entire collective farm to ruin, or to tell of his discovery and stand trial as a thief. The conflict between the public interests and his own safety takes on tragic force in the soul of this worthless idler, seemingly bereft of all honour. He himself does not understand the social significance of his sufferings, he is too accustomed to think only of himself. Nevertheless, he goes to the collective farm chairman.

This action, however, does not alleviate Kudin's crime in the eyes of the collective farmers outraged by his attempt to steal public property: he is arrested. But the court acquits Kudin, and gradually he wins the confidence of his fellow-peasants. Fyodor Kudin has nothing in common with the traditional didactic character of bourgeois fiction. He in no way resembles the poor man who finds a wallet and returns it to the rich owner. . . No abstract morality but ordinary human feelings forced Fyodor to confess his guilt: he did it because he could not do otherwise, because, in spite of his weakness, the new social morality had influenced the formation of his character.

The second theme is the story of the Furtsev family: when Furtsev loses both legs in the war, his wife takes him home uncomplainingly. But both of them are under a strain, they do not believe it possible to return to normal life.

The figure of the cripple Timofei, lying on his bed "gazing vacantly at the ceiling," tortured by the enforced inactivity, is deeply tragic. However, the author copes successfully with the difficult task of proving that the maimed and crippled by the war can find a place in life for themselves. Easily and truthfully he unravels the tangled skein of Timofei's fate. The writer is well acquainted with the psychology of the Russian peasant and knows the part played in the latter's life by work. Timofei regained his self-confidence only when he saw that there still was work for him to do.

Naturally much space is devoted to nature in a novel about the village. Maltsev loves and understands nature and skillfully portrays even its most elusive shades. Nevertheless, descriptions of the landscape never turn into ornamentation, although his metaphors are often daring and strong, aroused by unexpected associations. The steppe preens itself like a bird, bending its neck and spreading its feathers to the rainbow, the white-skinned birch trees wash their golden heads in the pure blue sky.

This sense of nature helps the reader to understand the feelings and impulses of the characters, and the plot of the book. Nikita, the collective farm chairman and the central figure in the novel, " . . . bent down, scooped up a handful of the warm black earth, smelling of smoke and wormwood, and slowly let it drop through his fingers. Perhaps that was how the blood, the warm heart's blood of his son, had flown from the hastily-bandaged wound, staining the shirt; and the thick drops were drawn in by the earth for which he fought. The earth! It lay before Nikita under the vast shining heavens in the gold of its harvest fields and the flaming campfires of the woods. His earth! He pressed his lips together grimly, let his eyes travel over the familiar, beloved landscape opening up from the hilltop, and walked on slowly in the face of the breeze from the fields."

The novel suffers from certain shortcomings in its compositional proportions. The author has not yet fully mastered the art of giving his work an inner finish, his phraseology in some places is not sufficiently musical.

Nevertheless, *Hot Springs* is an honest, truthful novel, picturing courageous life and struggle.

A PEASANT COMES FROM WAR

Nikolai Toshchakov. *Charoma. Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 96 pages.

The author named his novel after a village in a lake country, in the heart of Russia. Demobilized from the Soviet Army after four years of war, the local collective farmers come home. One of them is Afrikan Zhikharev, the father of a large family. In the four years he had spent at the front, he had seen a lot; he had crossed the fields of Orel, the steppes of the Ukraine, the vineyards of Moldavia, had seen the seacoast of Yugoslavia, the tall, dark houses of Budapest, the winding trails of the Transylvanian Alps, breathed the autumn winds spraying the dust over the banks of the turbid Danube. Wherever he went, he was always longing for his native haunts, the lakes, the marshes, the sky, and his own home soil.

On Zhikharev's homecoming, the story runs, he does not rush to put his ideas into effect. He finds the farmstead going to wrack and ruin. The death of his wife left his daughter, just out of school, to look after her brothers and sisters. One of Afrikan Zhikharev's sons had grown up, and learned to regard life seriously, fully understanding his responsibilities. While Afrikan had been away, his wife had given birth. This child became the object of much gossip and ill-natured curiosity. Would Afrikan recognize it as his own?

The ruined farm and the general disorder at home created an extremely unpleasant situation which might have discouraged anybody returned from the front. Zhikharev, however, resolutely begins to put his house in order. The author describes the collective farm in the first days after the war. There is a sad shortage of labour. But the men returned from the army are not urged to go to work at once. They are given every chance to look about, and to adjust themselves, while those that had remained, try to learn more about them and see how they have changed in the years of war. When Afrikan got down to work on his farm in such a way that his relatives and neighbours realized his full worth, they came to his aid.

Afrikan begins to put into effect all the innovations which he had conceived while in the army, trying to introduce on the collective farm the things he had seen during his wanderings in the war. Afrikan plans to use the narrow strips of land between the lakes that had never before been tilled. He hopes to plant them to vegetables.

The personal story of Afrikan unfolds against the general background. No sooner had he come home than he accepted the child left by his wife as his own. Soon he feels attracted by the collective farm woman Ekaterina Mikhailovna, a widow of his own age, with two children. The pain and hurts of them both, are gradually healed as their love grows.

The novel *Charoma* ends when Afrikan is at last able to devote himself fully to his chosen work. In the realities of Soviet life the author perceived the possibility of optimistically developing the theme of the soldier's homecoming and his recovery from the wounds inflicted by the war.

This, as is known, is one of the chief situations of post-war literature. In the literature of the West, as handled in a number of works, it reveals hopes betrayed and speedy disillusionment. John Priestley's *Three Men in New Suits* and the play *Deep Are the Roots* by James Gow and Arnau d'Usseau reflect the swift collapse of all ideas harboured by the veterans about their future in civilian life. Nikolai Toshchakov's novel *Charoma*, on the other hand, shows that under Soviet conditions the readjustment of the soldier is a perfectly natural process, which offers him the finest prospects.

STORIES ABOUT GOOD MEN

Alexei Shubin. *A Story of Good People. Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 257 pages.

This book of the young Soviet writer Alexei Shubin contains two narratives under the general title *A Story of Good People*. The plot of the first, *Dr. Velikanov Thinks and Acts*, is simple. Shubin here portrays the events of the Patriotic War through the medium of Dr. Velikanov's experiences. He is an old doctor who has spent many years in a small town. Long before, when he had been a young surgeon on the threshold of his career, his life had been marred by a tragedy. His wife had died in childbirth. Alone and broken-hearted, he spent sleepless nights studying the causes of his wife's death and realized that grave though the danger had been, her life could have been saved. The helplessness of medicine was obviously to blame. Dr. Velikanov then decided to devote his career to saving the lives of women and infants. In the first days of the Revolution he founded a maternity home and hospital and then laboured tenaciously through the years to render these institutions as perfect as they could be.

His chief assistant was the elderly nurse Ulyana Ivanovna. In the first days of the war a German aviation bomb destroyed the hospital. Several patients and nurses were killed. The fruits of many years of hard work were destroyed in the course of a few minutes. When the Germans were approaching the town, Velikanov and Ulyana Ivanovna departed together with the Soviet Army. The doctor strode the road of retreat a sad and bitter man. He witnessed the death of women and children, the suffering of Russian people compelled to flee before the enemy. So abruptly cut off from his life's work, at first he felt quite helpless. But before very long Velikanov, pondering over the terrible, inexplicable things that have come to pass, becomes a man of action, charged with hatred for the enemy who unleashed death upon the peaceful towns of Russia. Having lost his way and wandered into a village occupied by the Germans, Dr. Velikanov sees how the wrath of the people is mounting, how their resistance is growing.

With Ulyana Ivanovna, the doctor contacts a partisan detachment, participates in the raid on the German commandant post and helps liberate the village as the Soviet Army draws near.

After the liberation of his native town, Velikanov in the very first days receives patients in a half-ruined building. On a torn music sheet, discovered in the rubble, he records the birth of the first Soviet citizen to be born in the liberated town. Energetically he begins to build a new hospital amid the ruins, a structure which is to symbolize the triumph of life over death.

A kindly humour pervades the narrative, though the satire is sharp when the author describes the German officers and soldiers of the garrison in an occupied village. Grotesque and repellent is the German commandant Gustav Rencke. A martinet absurdly vain, he keeps a diary bombastically entitled: " The Road of a German Hero." This former bookkeeper who came to Russia in quest of "trophies" divided his diary into two columns: "Pleasant Surprises" and "Surprising Unpleasantness." Shubin depicts the cowardice and stupidity of Rencke, shows how the Soviet people changed his life from a series of "pleasant suprises," as it had been during the war in the West, into a chain of "Surprising Unpleasantness" ending with his annihilation at the hands of the partisans.

Alexei Shubin's second narrative, *The Riches of Matvei Galkin* is the story of a collective farm village after the Patriotic War. The author here shows how the psychology of the Soviet peasants has changed in Soviet times. Gone is the selfish and egoistic outlook of the private owner. It has yielded to new sentiments of the collective, of mutual aid and friendship on the job. Even the old fisherman Matvei Galkin, living in solitude, on his own homestead, far from the collective farm, does not think of gratifying his own pleasures when he acquires a large sum of money owing to an unexpected harvest of honey, but contributes it toward the construction of a new bridge.

Cover for the book Golovlyovs' Family *by Kukryniksy*

NEW EDITIONS OF THE RUSSIAN CLASSICS

Ivan Turgenev. *Selected Novelettes and Short Stories. State Literary Publishing House.* Moscow. 419 pages.

Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin. *Golovlyovs' Family. Children's Publishing House.* Moscow. 326 pages.

Anton Chekhov. *Selected Works. State Literary Publishing House.* Moscow. 471 pages.

Vladimir Korolenko. *Siberian Sketches and Short Stories.* Vols. 1 and 2. *State Literary Publishing House.* Moscow. 544 and 476 pages.

The State Literary Publishing House has released a new one-volume edition of *Selected Novelettes and Short Stories* by Ivan Turgenev. The book includes the novelettes and stories: *First Love, Assya, King Lear of the Steppes, Mumu, Wayside Inn, The Brigadier* and others.

The *Children's Publishing House* has published a new edition of *Golovlyovs' Family*, Saltykov-Shchedrin's finest work. The book was illustrated by the artists Kukryniksy (Kuprianov, Krylov, Sokolov).

The one-volume *Selected Works* by Anton Chekhov, newly issued by the *State Literary Publishing House* includes the narratives: *The Steppe, The Peasants, The Man in a Case, Little Soul, Ward No. 6*; the short stories, *The Bad Boy, Death of an Official, The Fat and the Lean, Chameleon, Surgery, Corporal Prishibeyev, Vanka, The Siren, The Roofer, Ionich*, and others; also the three plays: *The Seagull, Three Sisters*, and *Cherry Orchard*. This book too was illustrated by the Kukryniksy artists.

The *State Literary Publishing House* has put out a two-volume edition of *Siberian Sketches and Short Stories* by Vladimir Korolenko. Containing such well-known narratives of the author as *Makar's Dream, The Murderer, Fire Lights*, and *Temptation*, the collection also includes his sketches as yet unpublished in a separate edition and various archive material from his literary legacy written in Siberian exile. The book is prefaced by biographical data about Korolenko. It was edited and commentaries were written by the author's children, N. V. and S. V. Korolenko.

A TATAR CLASSIC

Habdulla Tukai. *Poems.* Translated from the Tatar. *State Literary Publishing House.* Moscow. 375 pages.

Habdulla Tukai, national Tatar poet, was born near Kazan in 1886. Early orphaned, Tukai was placed in a madrassa seminary where he spent about ten years.

Tukai was soon repelled by the scholastic-religious knowledge hammered into the minds of the pupils in the madrassa. Culture drew him irresistibly. He studied foreign languages, read all the fiction he could get. His taste in poetry was formed under the influence of the Russian classics.

Tukai's literary career began shortly after the Revolution of 1905.

Political lyrics hold the chief place in his art. It was he who wrote the well-known poem *We Shall Not Depart*, ridiculing the nationalist pan-Turkic idea. In this work the poet stressed the fraternal unity of the Tatar and Russian people, pointed to their common aims in the struggle for the liberation of Russia from tsarism.

Closely bound up with his political lyrics, was his satire which also grew increasingly sharp. In the period of reaction followed upon the defeat of the Revolution of 1905—Tukai mercilessly flayed the reactionary nationalists, the clergy, the merchants and philistines for their treachery, ignorance and cowardice before the tsarist officials. Many anonymous verses and epigrams from Tukai's pen were passed from hand to hand among the Tatar democrats.

Many of his works, too, were based on folk tales which reflected the customs and character of the Tatar people, revealing their innate wisdom and ingenuity. Tukai, with the aid of folklore, was the first to create a modern literary language bringing a breath of Russian poetry into the ancient canons of Eastern verse.

Tukai's life was hard. Hounded by his political enemies, deprived of shelter and a means of livelihood, he contracted tuberculosis and passed away in 1913 at the age of 27.

Tukai came to be the founder of realistic Tatar literature. His art exercised great influence on the development of modern poesy in the Central Asian republics of the Soviet Union—Kirghizia, Turkmenia, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

TALES OF MISERY AND DESPAIR

Vassili Stefanik. *Short Stories*. Translation from the Ukrainian by N. Lyashko. *Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 275 pages.

These stories are by an author whose individuality is as unique as the style in which he writes. Every line reflects the passionate, unyielding nature of a man of the people whose life and struggle is portrayed with intimate knowledge. His bitter, indignant stories tell about the life of the poor Ukrainian peasants, oppressed by the Austrian and Polish landowners.

Stefanik was born in a West Ukrainian village in Galicia where he spent many years of his life. He joined the democratic movement at an early age, and was a tireless defender of the peasants' rights, first, as a deputy from Galicia to the Austrian parliament, and later, as a writer and a leading civic figure in Galicia under imperialist Poland. He was not fated to see the liberation of his country. Nevertheless, after the October Revolution he was wholeheartedly with the people of the Soviet Ukraine where the peasantry lived a free and prosperous life.

Vassili Stefanik's book contains 50 stories; but one theme runs through them all and they cannot be considered separately: in effect, they form one long, bitter and wrathful poem in which there is nothing but the stark naked truth, a picture of that grim reality which surrounded Stefanik from childhood. In terse, hard words, as though speaking through clenched teeth, Stefanik portrayed this "pit of life."

The Maple Leaves, *Autumn*, *The News* describe the hungry, ragged, intimidated village children. *The News* is the story of the poor peasant Gryts Letuchi, who, made desperate by poverty and the indifference of those around him, drowns his younger daughter in the river and then attempts to drown the elder. With remarkable artistic power Stefanik conveys the conversation between the father and the daughter praying for her life. Sorrowfully and bitterly Gryts tells her: "Well, live if you want to, but the other way would have been best for you... What's ahead of you? Nothing but misery... later you'll go as nursemaid to the storekeeper's kids, only to find new misery..." The future awaiting his daughter seems more terrible to him than death.

The writer portrays the backbreaking toil of the hired farm labourers, perishing amidst need, filth, disease and quarrels, senselessly wasting away their lives in barracks and prisons, and left helpless and destitute in old age.

In *The Herald* he describes an old man who in the last days of his life is gathering sticks and weeds in another man's field for fuel. *Autumn* brings the dreadful figure of an old woman on her deathbed, calling upon death to come sooner and free her family of this extra burden.

The peasants in Stefanik's stories have not yet found the right path of struggle. They are oppressed by despair. The protest arising in their hearts is still shapeless and indistinct and, therefore, frequently finds expression in such desperate deeds as the murder of a rich man paid for by the lives and freedom of those guilty, as described in *The Trial*.

But what Stefanik paints are the "grapes of wrath", from which the true fighters for freedom spring later.

Stefanik has sometimes been described as a pessimist who saw no way out of the "abyss of life" in which the poor lived. The best reply to this unjust accusation are his own words: "I wrote that which was in my heart. They say I am a pessimist. But that is not true! . . As I wrote my tears flowed with my grief and blood. And if I have awakened in your hearts words of thunder, flashing with the light of the stars, that is optimism. . . ."

NEW TRANSLATIONS

William Shakespeare. *Comedies*. *Art* Publishing House. Moscow. 206 pages.

Alexander Dumas. *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Vols. 1 and 2. *State Literary Publishing House*. Moscow. 688 and 651 pages.

Orlin Vassilev. *The Horse of Kamber. Children's Publishing House.* Moscow. 67 pages.

The *Art* Publishing House has printed translations of Shakespeare's comedies: *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *All's Well That Ends Well.* The translations, adapted with a view to production on the Russian stage, are by the poet Vassili Levik and the Shakespeare critic Mikhail Morozov, and should help to popularize these two comedies hitherto not widely staged in the Soviet Union.

An introduction has been written by Morozov on the stage history of these two comedies and the special features of the new translation. The book is illustrated with etchings by E. Golyakhovsky.

A new translation of Alexander Dumas' novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*, edited by Nora Gal and Vera Toper, has just been published by the *State Literary Publishing House.* The two volumes are richly illustrated.

A book of stories for children by the modern Bulgarian writer Orlin Vassilev, translated into the Russian by Sergei Zaimovsky, has been issued by the *Children's Publishing House.* Vassilev's book contains six stories about Bulgarian children and three fairy tales taken from Bulgarian folklore. One of these *The Horse of Kamber* has lent its title to the book. Illustrations are by F. Lemkul.

A BOOK ABOUT A RUSSIAN TRAGEDIENNE

Zoya Feldman. *P. A. Strepetova (1850-1903). Art* Publishing House. Moscow. 59 pages.

Z. Feldman's book is dedicated to one of the greatest Russian tragediennes, P. A. Strepetova, an actress who came from the people and whose passionate and stirring portrayal of tragic roles taken from Russian life of the 70's and 80's of the 19th century was highly progressive for the times.

Strepetova was "past mistress of the art of the melodious, Russian colloquial speech," and having travelled back and forth throughout the whole of central Russia she knew every feature of life of the desolate Russian provinces and villages. Strepetova was one of those actresses whose personal and stage life were inseparably linked together, and each of her stage images was, at one and the same time, an artistic impersonation and the "cry of her own soul."

The adopted daughter of a perruquier in a theatre and a provincial actress, Strepetova learned to know poverty and sadness at an early age. Her childhood passed behind the scenes of theatres. At the age of 14 she made her first appearance on the stage.

Success attended the young actress everywhere. Possessed of no great beauty, with a thin, pale face and big, sad eyes, she immediately won the audience by her passionate dramatic temperament. Her slightly husky, expressive voice rang with true feeling, arousing a warm response in the hearts of her spectators. At the end of the 70's, having already won fame in the provinces, Strepetova went to Moscow, and in 1881 to St. Petersburg. Here she created a number of unforget-

P. Strepetova as Katerina in the Storm *by A. Ostrovsky*

table roles in Ostrovsky's plays, including those of the actress Kruchinina in *Guilty Though Guiltless* which the great playwright wrote especially for her, of Julia Tugina in *The Last Sacrifice*, and Maria Andreevna in *The Poor Bride.*

One of the last great roles created by Strepetova was the old woman Matrena in Tolstoy's drama *The Power of Darkness.* This was "a powerfully impressive figure, grim and cruel as the soul of this old woman distorted by the monstrous, abnormal living conditions in the village."

Strepetova died in 1903.

Z. Feldman devotes the second part of her book to an analysis of the most famous stage characters created by Strepetova—the meek and timid Katerina, the grief-exhausted peasant woman Lisaveta, and the unfortunate, abandoned Stepanida with all their conflicting emotions. The actress invariably succeeded in conveying the intricate inner life of her heroines, amazing in its wealth of thought and feeling.

The audience saw the "tortured human soul bare in all its woeful desolation." In these roles Strepetova was truly the "genius of suffering carried to great heights." Rebelling against all tyranny, in the home and society, she called for the emancipation of woman, her freedom to love and choose at the dictates of her own heart.

A MONOGRAPH ON FYODOR TOLSTOY

E. Mroz. *Fyodor Tolstoy. Art* Publishing House. Moscow. 39 pages.

Fyodor Tolstoy was one of the greatest Russian artists of the first half of the 19th

century. The author of many wonderful works of art of the most varied genres (statues, sculptured bas-reliefs, paintings, drawings, engravings) he, along with Kiprensky, Martos and Orlovsky, vividly portrayed the thoughts and feelings of the Russian people in the epoch of the Patriotic War of 1812.

The biographical material amassed and presented in an interesting form by E. Mroz shows how difficult and thorny was the path of the master. A member of the aristocracy (a count by title) he was condemned by society for making art his profession. His relatives turned away from Tolstoy, his betrothed's father forbade the marriage, poverty and hardships attended the artist for many long years. But his love of art and persistence in pursuing his desired aim conquered. Having studied for a considerable period under Ivan Prokofiev, eminent sculptor of that period, Tolstoy launched on an independent career. His talent flowered during the first stage of the war against Napoleon: 1805-1810. Adhering to classicism, the strongest tendency in Russian sculpture of that period, Tolstoy carved a number of bas-reliefs and medals, the allegorical figures which lauded courage, valour, moral perfection. Such were his *Romulus' Triumphal Entrance Into Rome*, *A Family Portrait*, and several other works. These soon won recognition and the 25-year-old master was elected member of the Academy of Arts, an honour which, in his time, had not been awarded to any artist under the age of fifty.

Fyodor Tolstoy won greatest fame, however, by a series of 21 medals devoted to events of the Patriotic War: *The People's Guards*, *The Battle of Borodino*, *The Liberation of Moscow*, *Napoleon's Flight Across the Nieman*, and others. Tolstoy's sincere patriotism and art were highly appraised in Russia and abroad. Goethe himself paid tribute to the medallist. In these medals Tolstoy usually groups two or three figures in the form of a triangle, seeking to leave as little background as possible. While resorting to antique allegories, the artist nevertheless always seeks to emphasize the Slav nature of his heroes, their dress and weapons.

Tolstoy eagerly undertook the most widely different artistic commissions. He designed the statue of a nymph which ornamented the "Lion Cascade" in Peterhof and was destroyed by the fascist invaders. Several large sculptured portraits and plaster of Paris ornaments for the Cathedral of the Saviour in Moscow were the work of this master.

At the same time, Tolstoy was extremely clever with the pencil. The best exponents of his graphic art are the sixty-four illustrations to Bogdanovich's poem *Dushenka*.

Tolstoy painted a number of beautiful canvases, water colours, gouaches, sepias and sketched the decorations and costumes for two ballets: *The Echo* and *The Golden Harp*.

A BOOK ABOUT THE RHEIMS CATHEDRAL

German Nedoshivin. *The Rheims Cathedral.* *Art* Publishing House. Moscow. 32 pages.

The *Art* Publishing House has issued a small monograph by Herman Nedoshivin, devoted to the ensemble of the Rheims Cathedral, this famous monument of French medieval architecture. The cathedral was built in response to the desire to embody in some grand work of art the ideas of the unity and community of interests of the French people divided by feudal conflicts.

The book tells the history of the building of the cathedral in great detail—from the days of its first architect, Jean D'Orbais to those numerous builders who took part in the last stage of its construction at the beginning of the 16th century.

With great skill Nedoshivin leads us on an extremely interesting excursion through the Gothic Cathedral. He shows us the rich play of rhythm which permeates the whole building, draws our attention to the fine work of the stonemasons who created the remarkable tracery ornaments on the facade, reveals secrets of the construction which give the huge stone building an ethereal appearance, resembling a living body eager to wing its way up to the firmament. The same impression is made upon the visitor by the interior of the cathedral: swift, restless lines, sweeping upwards into infinite space.

Before proceeding to analyze the wonderful sculptures decorating the cathedral, the author draws a miniature, yet eloquent pen picture of the mental life of the man of the Middle Ages. He points out that "medieval man was forced to express his artistic tastes and satisfy his artistic desires primarily through the medium of religious art. . ." Thoughts and feelings were governed despotically and the artist either worked humbly as a craftsman on the task assigned to him or lived in a tormenting chaos of creative desires, blinded by the powerful system of the church. However, from approximately the 12th century a serious change took place in the life of the feudal society: "in the cities the distant rumblings of the revolutionary storm began to be heard, an angry and wrathful denial of the ecclesiastical culture and at the same time, a disdainfully sceptical attitude towards the ideas of the feudal church world began to appear accompanied by the naive desires for the simple joys of life. . . A new human individuality was born. And we see its embodiment in the sculptures of the Rheims Cathedral."

In conclusion, the author defines the historical significance of the Rheims Cathedral: "The artists of the Rheims Cathedral stood at the cradle of French culture, they were amongst the first to foster and express it."

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